

BFB

Beyond the Boundaries
The PCA membership magazine
for players past & present



ISSUE

35

TAKING CONTROL
PLAYERS SHAPING THEIR FUTURES

WHAT A MATCH
T20 FINAL 2014

GRAHAM THORPE
REMEMBERED

OLIVIA BELL

DANIEL BELL-DRUMMOND

TOM CURRAN

MARCUS NORTH

EVE JONES

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ALEC STEWART PLAYING IT
HIS WAY

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EVOLVING THE GAME

Welcome to Issue 35 of Beyond the Boundaries, the PCA's bi-annual membership magazine. The year of 2024 has been one of evolution as we move into the 2025-28 broadcast cycle with five key agreements successfully negotiated and one more being worked on, placing the players at the heart of our game.

As ever, cricket never stands still and we should be proud of a game that constantly pushes itself to be better. As we enter the winter months, it is crunch time around private investment into The Hundred and our domestic women's players are settling into their new county environments, alongside their male counterparts.

The implementation of the one club, two team ethos is a key feature of your magazine as you can read the thoughts of Durham's Director of Cricket Marcus North, a variety of players and understand the reasoning behind the changes from the ECB from page 24.

From the beginning of a new era to the end of one as I congratulate Alec Stewart

on his stellar time at Surrey as he steps back from his day-to-day role after winning three consecutive County Championships. Stewie has been an outstanding servant to our game and it is fitting he takes centre stage in this issue, I would encourage you to read his exclusive interview from page 36.

I want to thank Adam Hollioake on his powerful words on the tragic passing of the great Graham Thorpe earlier this year. It is an emotional read as he recounts some of their best times together.

The Cricketers' Trust has continued to help past and present cricketers every day of the year and you can read about this and the latest fundraising challenge to be announced on page 56. The image of Syd Lawrence with James Bracey and the Vitality Blast trophy for me is the image of 2024.

Finally, I would like to wish everyone a very happy festive season and good luck to our England sides ahead of the Ashes and Champions Trophy in early 2025.

Enjoy your magazine.





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Everything you could ever need



CONTINUOUS GROWTH

JAMES HARRIS on handing over the reins as PCA Chair following the conclusion of his two-term stint.



Four years have passed in a blink of an eye as I sit here writing my final column as Chair of the Professional Cricketers' Association.

I formally step down at the AGM at the beginning of March and I look back with great pride at how the PCA has developed during my tenure and reflect on the advancements we have made for the betterment of professional cricketers, male and female.

It is hard to look back at one singular achievement that stands above the rest. The game is evolving literally on a

daily basis and I feel the ability to grow and adapt to the ever-changing needs and requirements of players sits at the top of the tree for me.

We have been a driving force behind the revolution of the women's game.

With over 140 professional females from 2025 and equal minimum salaries with the men, it is a brilliant achievement as a game.

There's no quiet time in the cricketing world these days and I've had a particularly busy 2024 with the birth of our little girl at the start of the summer. That has made time management even more important in a year that has been ground-breaking in so many ways

with multiple negotiations.

One challenge throughout was the new broadcast deal flatlining, meaning in real terms there was less money in the ECB's pot. We had to prioritise the key agreements ahead of what we feel could be a substantial injection of capital with the private investment into The Hundred, a competition we should be thankful for as without it, the financial situation of the sport could be perilous.

These are incredibly exciting times in cricket in this country. If you are a young player or someone in the middle of your career, male or female you should be ready to take the opportunities that are in front of you right now and the ones that are about to present themselves in the next few years.





If you are a young player or someone in the middle of your career, male or female you should be ready to take the opportunities that are in front of you right now.

We discussed all of this at our Summit in October, with one outstanding issue for our male members, the domestic schedule. While the decision makers have kicked it down the road again, I do feel there is a lot of positive movement towards 2026 for which we have to be proactive over the next few months.

Even though my four-year stint as PCA Chair is ending, I have signed a new contract with Glamorgan which I am very excited about. It is time for somebody else to come in and lead the player voice. I aim to play a big part in the handover process, to make sure the transition is as smooth as possible for the next person to take over.

This role has been very important in my career and has taught me a lot of skills which I otherwise wouldn't have received. I have been lucky enough to sit with some fabulous people who are on the Board at the PCA and the wider cricketing fraternity.

I must admit, my biggest learning was understanding the inner workings of the game at a much more granular level. It provided me with a good perspective on how the game works, how the PCA operates and how much

it does for players in England and Wales.

When my term ends, it also means I step back from my role as a Trustee for the Cricketers' Trust although it won't be the end of my commitment to the cause. It has been an incredibly eye-opening experience to see first-hand the number of past and present players that need support. The ability of this small but powerful charity to provide life-changing and sometimes lifesaving treatment is something we should all be immensely grateful for and if you can, please do support our charity.

I look forward to seeing who the next Chair will be and working with them in a thorough handover. After four years the time is right for a fresh voice and some renewed energy to lead the players voice through the next two years.

Thank you for entrusting me.

JAMES HARRIS
PCA Chair



ABOVE PCA Chair, James Harris gets interviewed for TV at the cinch PCA Awards in 2024.

LEFT PAGE James Harris playing for Glamorgan during the 2024 Vitality County Championship.



AHEAD OF THE CURVE

DONNA FRASER looks ahead to ensuring the PCA's EDI focus is set by the members themselves.

There is a saying that equality, diversity and inclusion is a journey with no end destination. There is always more to learn and human beings evolve, just like cricket does out on the field.

In the summer of 2020, the PCA set up an EDI Working Group, driven by former player and PCA Inclusion Champion, Abi Sakande. The group was championed by the PCA Leadership Team and consisted of former and current players, ECB and PCA representatives who came together to initially discuss and address the racial issues within the game.

I joined the PCA in October 2022 and part of my role was to pick up the reins and Chair this group. Since then, Abi and I co-chair the group and the meetings are structured around three pillars; accountability, clarity and education. This approach has allowed connectivity amongst the group, enabling us to hold ourselves accountable and monitor progress.

With 2025 fast approaching, Abi and I feel it is now the right time to evolve the group to go beyond being a platform to share updates in the EDI space within cricket, but to get to the core of tackling inequalities within cricket with action.

Our members are at the centre of everything we do and this group should be no different, therefore we want to capitalise on the player voice and improve communication streams.

In 2025, we will be launching a new EDI approach for the PCA.

 Our members are at the centre of everything we do.

Introducing a new player group led by Abi, it will involve former and current player contribution to make a positive difference and inform our decision making and find solutions to the issues and concerns that impact our members.

This will filter to the EDI Working Group which will be refreshed and renamed. This new approach is a fundamental contribution to cricket being an inclusive sport.

We will recruit players who are passionate about making a difference and want to join our EDI family. I'm excited to be working alongside Abi with newly generated ideas to make a positive difference for the game and our members.

If you are interested in joining the player group, please contact me or your PDM.



DONNA FRASER OBE
Director of People & EDI



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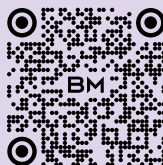
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MEET THE REP DAVID PAYNE

“It’s great to be part of a working group that can listen to the challenges of the game and be able to take it back to our county.”

David Payne enjoyed a great summer as part of a successful Gloucestershire outfit. The seam bowler played a vital role in helping his side win the 2024 Vitality Blast for the first time in their history for which he was recognised as Player of the Year.

The 33-year-old featured in 17 matches, finishing as the tournament’s leading wicket-taker with 33 scalps, including three wickets in the final against Somerset.

Payne, along with batter Miles Hammond is part of the PCA Players’ Committee, as Gloucestershire representatives. The England international is one of the more experienced players on the domestic circuit and is well-versed in voicing his opinions for the betterment of his peers and the game in general.

In conversation with Beyond the Boundaries, the left-armer said: “Being the Rep is a vital role. It’s great to have a second Rep in Miles who is

slightly younger to offer a different perspective. Being part of a working group that can listen to players is the most important thing, taking that back to our counties and passing that information onto younger players is most significant.”

Payne was one of the attendees at the 2024 PCA Summit held in Paris in October to discuss topical issues affecting cricket. The bowler remained outspoken about various concerns like scheduling in the men’s game and questioned the ECB on Gloucestershire’s financial troubles in recent times.

“We can do a lot more as Reps, getting through to the Chairs, CEOs, and other top leaders of the club because that’s where change is most likely to happen. We can share ideas we collect from the dressing room to make the higher-ups aware of how we would like things to change going forward,” he said.

The now white-ball specialist

concluding that “the Summit is such an important time of year as everyone can come together and discuss the big topics and issues in the game. And what better place to do it than Paris.”



SCAN FOR INFO ON
**PLAYERS’
COMMITTEE**



RIGHT A mural of England and Surrey batter Graham Thorpe at the Kia Oval, unveiled after his passing in August 2024.

1969 - 2024

REMEMBERING GRAHAM THORPE

Surrey and England's **ADAM HOLLIOAKE** pays tribute to his good friend and former teammate who tragically passed away on Sunday 4 August 2024, aged 55.

One of the first things that struck me about Thorpey when we met as teenagers was the way he went about his business in such a cool, calm and mature manner. Maybe that's why people were already talking about him as a future England star at 17.

My abiding memory of him in our Surrey changing room, where there were some very loud, confident characters, was that Thorpey would quietly play with his bat handle, pen knife in hand, adjusting the grip and tinkering with his instrument like a concert violinist, as if it was an art form. Indeed, he did imitate an artist with bat in hand. He was quietly spoken but when he did speak, people listened or if someone was getting a bit loud he would shut them down with an epic one-liner.

Thorpey was more interested in private in-depth conversations, meaningful one on one discussions and I still remember the incredibly in-depth conversations we had around the time my brother passed away. He would come to me and talk about marriage and his children, he always had such a mature analysis of life.



We formed a strong bond out on the pitch, batting together at number four and six, it would often be down to us to get the team across the line to win a game. One of my favourite things to do in cricket was winning a game batting with Thorpey. That creates a special bond between players. There is an intimacy to those conversations you have out in the middle, they are special

moments when you bond with a person and at times it often felt like the two of us against the world.

His legacy for Surrey and England will live on forever, he played one hundred Tests and then coached England, we're talking about the absolute upper echelon of service to England cricket here from England under-19s as a 17-year-old, to still coaching at 53, that's a long time.



He was loved in our changing room and was part of that team that won nine trophies in seven years, a wonderful team man and a great person to have around.

Thorpey loved coaching and talking about batting, he's had a profound effect on some of the best players in the world. He loved working with Joe Root, Ben Stokes and Jonny Bairstow, as well as all the Surrey legends. He loved developing their games and loved the process of making a county player into a quality England Test player. He really thrived on that, I think he may have lost a bit of his identity when that was taken away from him.

The day I found out was surreal, myself and Alec Stewart were at Guildford comparing messages we'd

sent him and how we could try and help. Then I got the phone call. He is one of my favourite people in the world and without being disrespectful to his life, it didn't come as big a surprise as it might have. I feel everyone tried so hard and he tried so hard himself but he just didn't want to be here anymore and I think that made the phone call easier than it might have been because I knew it was a release from his pain.

I felt at least my mate wasn't in pain anymore, he wasn't tortured and I was glad his pain was gone because I know how much he had suffered. I'm just so sad we have lost our friend.

**RIP, Thorpey
Smokes**

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Call: **07780 008 877**



Warwickshire Bears captain Varun Chopra lifts the T20 Blast trophy after beating Lancashire Lightning at Edgbaston.

WHAT A GAME

Freddie Flintoff takes a wicket in front of the Hollies. Who else?



Two teams at the top of their game. Two star-studded lineups. It all went down to the wire. **STEVEN CROFT** tells Lancashire's side of the story, leaving **LAURIE EVANS** to fill in the gaps for the Bears.

LAURIE EVANS: I remember going into finals day, having had a really good campaign. I'd put in a couple of player of the match performances in the group games and was hitting the ball pretty well. And it was a home game for us. We played first, but I didn't get any runs in the first semi-final. So instead of sitting and watching and waiting, I went out to the nets with Tony Frost, our batting

coach, and my abiding memory is how noisy it was in the ground, but how quiet it was over there. And we just hit balls, reinforcing all of the good things I'd been doing to that point.

STEVEN CROFT: My abiding memory of the match is Andrew Flintoff bowling to Chris Woakes at the end of the Warwickshire innings. It was just great to watch. Fred was my hero. He'd come out of retirement to play, and it felt a real

privilege to be out there with someone I looked up to. As we all did. And having him playing took the pressure off a bit.

LE: I only watched the game back fairly recently, and I can't believe how much the game has changed in 10 years. I was a young guy then, and not very experienced. Our strategy at the time was to build a platform and then my job was to finish the innings off with a bit of a crescendo.

SC: Fred got Ian Bell out early on – caught at mid off I think. And I opened the bowling as an off-spinner, which is obviously something that's done quite a lot – and was definitely done a



lot more 10 years ago. It was a defensive move back then, especially if there was a left-hander in at the top of the order. The idea being to get through an over before anyone had settled. That doesn't happen so much now. Sides are much more attacking with the new ball, looking to swing it and take wickets.

LE: I never found it easy, facing Crofty's 'knuckleballs'. When I came in it felt like I was scratching around a bit, but I edged one from Steven – it might have even gone for four – to that point I was probably on something like 10 from 15 balls, which never looks or feels great.

SC: It's easy to forget, because of just how brilliant a Test bowler Jimmy Anderson became, but he's also England's leading white-ball wicket-taker. It feels odd now to think of him playing in that final, but it wasn't then.

LE: It got to the last five overs, and it was time to go. I targeted Jimmy and it came off.

SC: Laurie always did well against us! I remember him getting other scores against us, both for Warwickshire and Surrey.

LE: I didn't know it at the time, but it definitely put me on the map. Before that I was a pretty naive cricketer.

SC: Score-wise, I think they would have probably been the happier of the two sides at the halfway point. With it being the third game on the pitch and runs on the board always creates pressure. Especially in crunch games.

LE: It was definitely a decent score – and now as an experienced cricketer I'd have taken that score in a final all day – but back then I didn't have a clue.

SC: I remember us going pretty well, but we got to a point where we just needed someone to bat through and see us over the line. That's a lot more difficult than it sounds. In those situations, if someone can get to grips with the pace of the pitch and still keep things moving, it gives license for people to come in and take risks.

LE: I know I caught a couple of catches in the final, but I remember dropping Karl Brown on one or two at long-on, and he then started to smash it everywhere. That was not a good feeling.

SC: No-one could get going until

Fred went in...

LE: I know that Andrew Flintoff came in at the last minute to playing in the final on an injury. And when he came in at the end it felt like we were watching a fairytale ending. But it went with us and they finished a handful of runs short.

SC: To get so close and not get over the line is always tough. We'd been to a few finals by that stage – and I think Lancashire has won more T20 games than any other club – but such are the margins, it's a hard trophy to win.

LE: It's 10 years since then, and I've not won it since. I remember it being a special day for the club. A home final. It was especially great to have family and friends in the dressing room after the match. For a long time after close of play. People like Keith Cook – someone who had been at Edgbaston for over 40 years, and the dressing room attendant, Robin French, for them to experience winning was particularly great.

SC: I think even the best teams in the world only win around 60 per cent of their matches. And finals day is a unique experience.

23 AUGUST 2014 WARWICKSHIRE VS LANCASHIRE T20 BLAST FINAL AT EDGBASTON

Warwickshire 181/5
EVANS 53, **SMITH** 2-30

Lancashire 177/8
BROWN 55, **HANNON-DALBY** 3-31

Umpires:
MICHAEL GOUGH, **ROB BAILEY**

WARWICKSHIRE WON BY FOUR RUNS

Warwickshire

IAN BELL
VARUN CHOPRA (C)
WILL PORTERFIELD
RIKKI CLARKE
LAURIE EVANS
CHRIS WOAKES
ATEEQ JAVID
TIM AMBROSE (+)
JEETAN PATEL
BOYD RANKIN
OLIVER HANNON-DALBY

Lancashire

TOM SMITH
ASHWELL PRINCE
USMAN KHAWAJA
KARL BROWN
JOS BUTTLER (+)
STEVEN CROFT
PAUL HORTON (C)
JORDAN CLARK
ANDREW FLINTOFF
STEPHEN PARRY
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- Kate Cross

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SHORT STORIES AND UPDATES FROM THE WORLD OF CRICKET



GLOBAL HARDSHIP FUND

The World Cricketers' Association met in Singapore for its AGM in November as they announced the establishment of its Global Players Hardship Fund.

The Fund is designed to support international players in need who are not covered by the game's existing domestic support structures.

WCA's Head of Welfare and Education, JP Van Wyk, said: "Although this fund will operate within certain constraints, and will complement domestic offerings, we are certain it is going to assist those current and recently retired international cricketers who are presently unsupported and vulnerable."

The Fund will be governed by a group of experts and players' associations representatives.

DOMINANT DAWSON & BRILLIANT BRYCE

Hampshire all-rounder Liam Dawson amassed a phenomenal 635.22 MVP points during 2024 to win the PCA Men's Domestic Overall MVP award for the second year in succession, thanks to taking 71 wickets and scoring 1,280 runs across all formats.

The Blaze and Scotland all-rounder Kathryn Bryce earned the PCA Women's Domestic Overall MVP by securing 394.56 points across the season, thanks to scoring 868 runs and taking 32 wickets in the three competitions.

The PCA's MVP formula enables players to gain or lose points on every ball based on their expected performance in comparison to CricViz's extensive historical database.





GOOCH & GOLF GREAT SUCCESS

The Cricketers' Trust and former England captain Graham Gooch teamed up to organise the inaugural Cricketers' Trust Golf Invitational in the Algarve, Portugal.

The three-day event comprising of 52 golfers, raised an incredible £45,000 for the players' charity.

The team consisting of four PCA Reps: Martin Andersson, Kate Cross, Rob Keogh and Phoebe Graham came out victorious.

Gooch said: "I strongly believe in everything the Trust does to help past, present and future players. It's a wonderful charity."



CORNEY'S CLIMATE CONUNDRUM

Somerset batter Emma Corney is setting up a sustainability action group for PCA members. The 21-year-old sent out a survey and wants the opinions of players on climate related issues to help raise awareness around how these issues affect cricket.

The top order batter, who is completing a degree in Environmental Science, wants to compile a group of members who are willing to create action plans to support positive impact across the game regarding the climate and sustainability.

**To find out more contact Martin Cropper:
MARTIN.CROPPER@THEPCA.CO.UK**



PCA IN PARIS

The PCA Players' Committee held a constructive Summit in October to discuss topical issues across the men's and women's game.

Reps were invited to the three-day event at the Mercure Eiffel Tower Hotel to deliberate on the cricketing landscape and share the opinions from their dressing rooms.

ECB representatives were in attendance as players received updates and were able to hold their governing body to account.

PCA Chair James Harris said: "We're trying to get ahead of any teething problems that might happen in the future, highlighting that the PCA is here for all the players."

HOLLAND'S BARNACLE BUSINESS

Leicestershire and USA all-rounder Ian Holland is launching an innovative surf clock to keep boarders on track during their adventures.

Created from moulded recycled plastic, the device sticks to any surfboard, snowboard or kayak allowing users to enjoy their outdoor activities and fully disconnect from their devices and technology.

The device displays the time and includes a compass as the company, 'Surf Barnacle', aims to be sustainable, passionate about adventure and give back to the community.

The Barnacle is launching soon on Kickstarter, find out more here: SURFBARNACLE.COM



RECOGNITION OF SERVICE

The year of 2025 will be one of celebration for a quartet of county cricket loyalists who have been awarded testimonial years for their clubs.

Essex opener Nick Browne, Surrey red-ball captain Rory Burns, Sussex T20 skipper Tymal Mills and Middlesex batter Sam Robson will be on the road in the next 12 months raising funds as part of their events.



BARBER ACES UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE

Former Nottinghamshire and Middlesex seamer Tom Barber represented Open University on series 31 of the popular television quiz show, University Challenge. Barber formed part of the four-player team which beat University College London (UCL) in the first round.

Barber, a physics student at the university, had an eventful time on set, including an incident where the recording was forced to take a pause due to a disagreement in answers between himself and an opposing contestant.

The 29-year-old expressed his wealth of general knowledge by giving some excellent answers to help his side secure victory. "It was a great experience and I still keep in contact with the team from UCL over our love of quizzing," said Barber.

ON DAYBOOO

1 AUGUST 2020

**WARWICKSHIRE VS
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
EDGBASTON**

New Yorkshire recruit and former Northamptonshire seamer **JACK WHITE** – not of the White Stripes – does his level best to remember his first game in the first team.



It was a four-day game in the Bob Willis Trophy against the Bears, away in Birmingham. There wasn't much to write home about in terms of a crowd since it was the first game back after the pandemic.



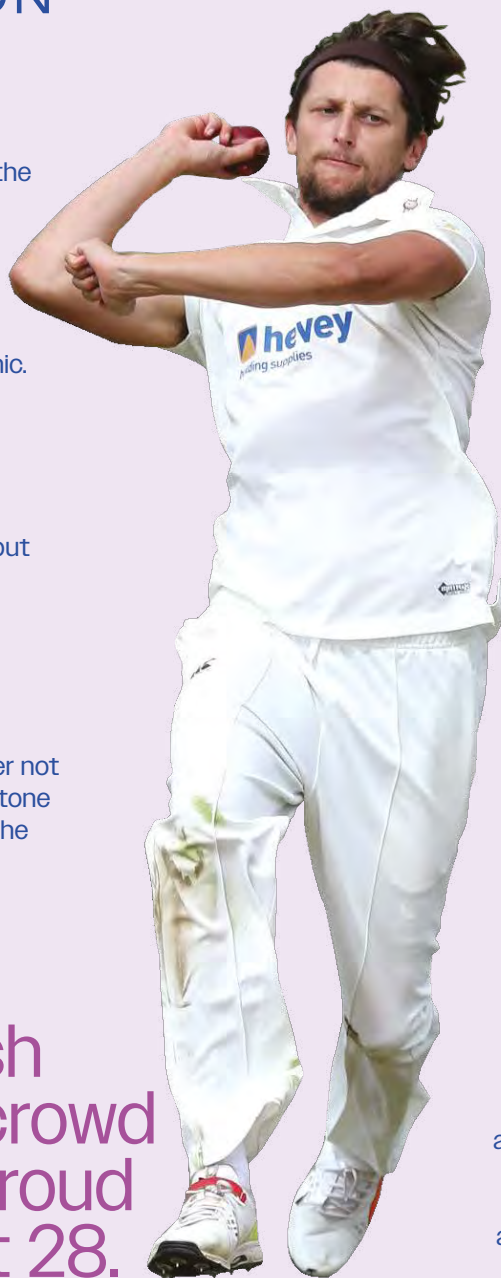
I got the call-up during the warm-up. I expected to play but hadn't had the nod until that morning. I felt about ready. If not a touch rusty.



We batted first, I remember not being too keen to face Olly Stone and then getting bowled by the off-spinner, Alex Thomson.



It's rubbish without a crowd but still a proud moment at 28.



Did I get a duck? Two's a pretty good start. It was all downhill from there with the bat.



When it came to bowl, my first ball went for a wide. Nathan Buck didn't give me too much encouragement from mid-on: 'You only get one first ball', he said. I haven't bowled one since thankfully.



I took two wickets, my first being Sam Hain rapped on the pad for six. Celebrations were muted without a crowd.



Finishing up with a draw set us up for a successful season. I was the leading wicket-taker if I remember correctly.



When the second innings came around, Bucky was padded up for an age. We ended up swapping for the final session, which put me as high as number eight, but I never made it to the crease. Which was a relief.

BM BROOKS
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INVESTING IN YOUR FUTURE

The former Lancashire and Leicestershire seamer **GAVIN GRIFFITHS** has enjoyed his transition into a career in finance.



Less than a year after retiring from the game, Gavin Griffiths found himself working with PCA Official Financial Wellbeing Partner Brooks Macdonald, however, the process of transitioning out the game had started long before.

The 31-year-old, who made 117 professional appearances and took 153 wickets, always knew he would have to find work after his playing career.

"I was never the most naturally talented cricketer, so I always had to put in 100% of my time, but once I started planning for what was next, it became a lot easier to transition away from the game."

During the covid pandemic, Griffiths began searching for his next career and came across financial planning with the help of his Personal Development Manager.

"I learnt that I enjoy finance and helping people, so it seemed like a natural fit. With the help of the PCA I was put in touch with numerous companies and clearly made an impression at Brooks and secured the role.

"At Brooks, through our partnership with the PCA, we work with a number of

cricketers, managing their finances, so it has been nice to feel like I still have a connection to cricket."

The 2015 T20 Blast winner wants players to enjoy their time in cricket while preparing as much as possible for what life looks like beyond the field by utilising their players' union.

"You have lots of free time and many transferable skills for the working environment, it's also very easy to complete qualifications alongside playing with the help of the PCA."

In 2022, Griffiths spoke at the PCA Futures Conference as a Brooks Macdonald employee and wants to encourage players to get involved with PCA workshops.

"Speaking at the Futures Conference was a great experience and players should always spend time at these events, I would implore as many of them as possible to attend and start thinking about transitioning.

"Moving out of the game was a big change for me, but because I prepared for it over a few years, it made the whole process much easier from a mental perspective."

Brooks Macdonald is the PCA's Official Financial Wellbeing Partner, get in touch to discuss your finances and a free financial wellbeing session
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A DOMESTIC CHAMPION

Kent's MVP over the past five years is the club's current red-ball captain **DANIEL BELL-DRUMMOND**.

1,445.06

PCA MVP Points

5,294

Runs



Winning the Vitality Blast in 2021 was the best day of my career.



12 Match MVPs



It is always an honour to captain a county, especially for me being my home county, one that I've grown up in.

146.57

T20 Strike-Rate



300*

First-Class Highest Score



The MVP is a great tool that's used and I know the guys are happy with it in the changing rooms around the country.

17 Vitality Blast Half-Centuries

8 First-Class Centuries



I've been at the peak of my powers, and hopefully I can keep that going. I've been putting in the work and it's been an enjoyable period.

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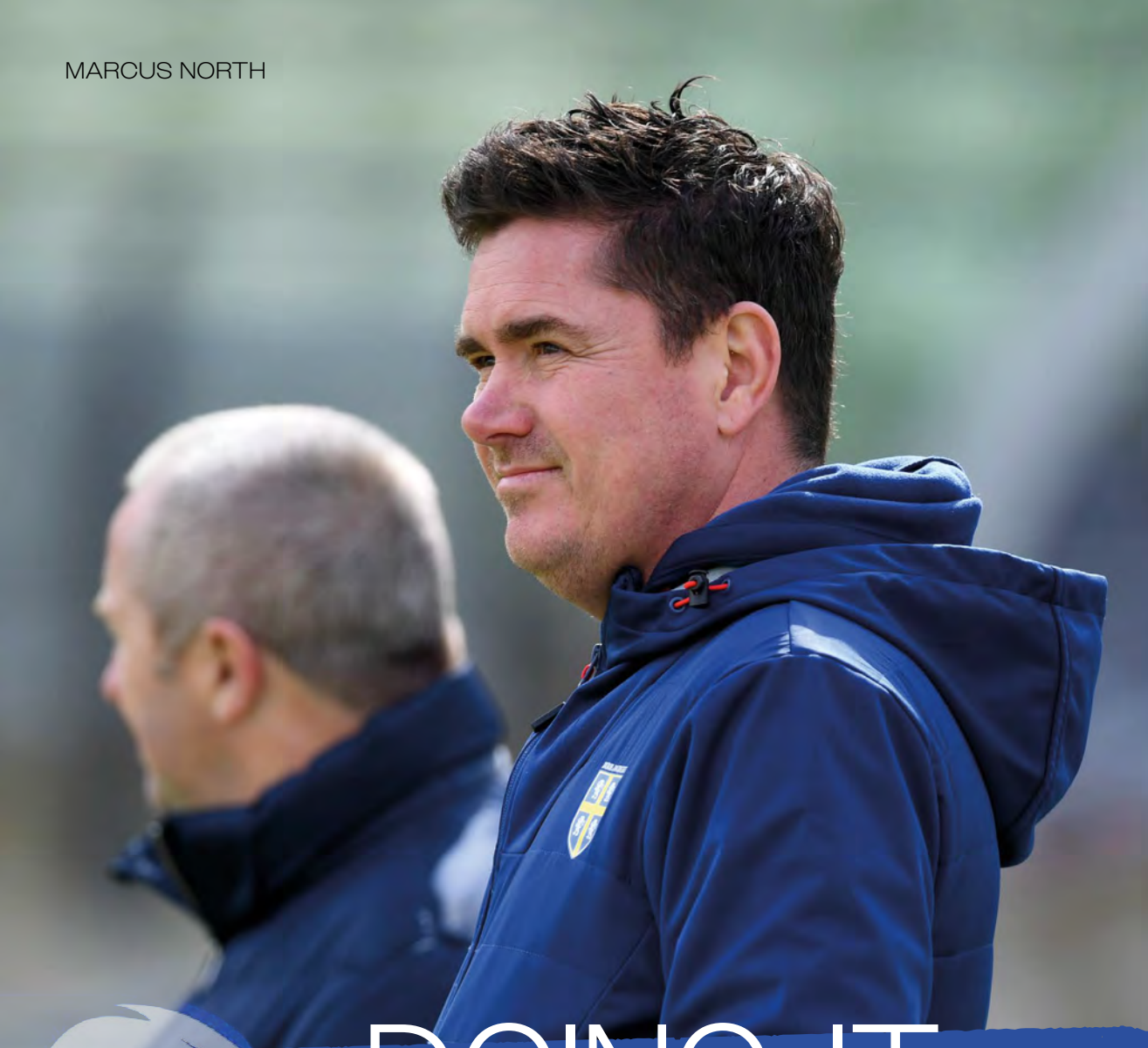


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DOING IT DURHAM

Building great cricketers and great people,
MARCUS NORTH speaks to Beyond the Boundaries
about the restructuring of Women's County Cricket
and what it means to live in the Northeast.

MARCUS NORTH JOINS VIA ZOOM FROM HIS OFFICE AT THE RIVERSIDE GROUND,

framed by the muted grey of a typical British November morning. In contrast to the weather outside, his positively sun-soaked Aussie attitude is the immediate characteristic that shines through.

The Durham lion sits proudly on his chest – an athletic-fit tracksuit being the Director's choice over a suit and tie. "The Northeast has become my home," he opens up whilst spinning his laptop around to show the ground staff putting the turf to bed. "Beautiful view, isn't it?"

With the only appropriate response being a nod of the head, it amounts to a yellow and blue-tinted view of proceedings out the window, but one he remains true to. For Marcus, it's more than a view; it's a testament to nearly two decades of roots planted in the county. "I first came to Durham in 2004, when they took a chance on me as an overseas player. Add five years of league

cricket before that, plus six years in my current role as Director of Cricket, and here I am – 45 years old – having spent more of my life in the Northeast than in Australia."

For North, his bond with Chester-le-Street goes beyond a professional one. "Working at this club is a privilege. And one that I don't take for granted," he says. The five-time Test centurion's connection to the region was grounded at South Northumberland Cricket Club, where he continued playing post-retirement. "It was where I showed my son what cricket meant to me," he shares, describing the club as "a miniature county cricket club, with bars, indoor facilities, and professional coaching." It was there that he laid the groundwork for his move into the big leagues.

"The club trusted me as CEO, and I learned a tremendous amount about the principles of business in sport. That experience came full circle when Durham was facing challenges – financial issues, forced relegation, and players leaving gave me the opportunity to step in when called upon and make a difference," North explains, now six years into his role as Director of Cricket at the 142-year-old club.

In just over half a decade in



ABOVE
Aussie lads
Ryan Campbell
and Marcus
North celebrate
winning the
Division
Two title in
September
2023.

BELOW
North
celebrates
making a
century for
Western
Australia at the
Adelaide Oval
in November,
2010.

charge, North suggests cricket has changed more than in any other era. One of the most rewarding developments, he suggests, is Durham's most recent bid to host one of eight women's Tier 1 county teams in 2025. "This is a new chapter for us," he says.

"The place is buzzing with excitement, we've got players coming in and collecting their kit, some are having a hit in the nets, and that's before the official start date. There's a great vibe around the ground, the day is finally here where we can start our next chapter with two professional teams under one roof."

Durham's commitment to developing women's and girls' cricket isn't new, North emphasises: "The gym here is one of the best on the county circuit, designed to be multifunctional for both our men's and women's squads. We're upgrading changing rooms and aiming for world-class facilities across the board. Most of which we have in place already."

Aligned with the men's game for the first time, North is confident in the impact of the new three-tier system and is particularly excited about the Vitality Blast T20 competition. "Double-headers will be perfect for showcasing the best of women's cricket and fostering support in the region –



The day is finally here where we can start our next chapter with two professional teams under one roof.



We want to see the next Lauren Filer coming through our system. And you can't be what you can't see.

like we've seen in The Hundred.

"Not having Test match cricket here, or a Hundred team gives us the freedom to do what we like with pitches. We've got a nursery ground plus two separate off-ground turf net facilities. And as far as playing matches goes, unless we strategically decide to play at out-grounds – which we sometimes do with the men – our anticipation is that both men's and women's sides will share equal use of the ground. All in the effort to build our existing support and create a real atmosphere around the region. In turn, this gives us the best chance of winning some silverware by the end of the season.

Of all eight counties hosting Tier 1 cricket in 2025, Durham is the smallest. Geographically speaking. But one that continues to punch well above its weight. The reasoning for this, North suggests, comes in the form of neighbouring counties. "Durham, Northumberland, North Cumbria, Scotland, and Yorkshire now with the women make up the bulk of our squads. With a few players brought in from other pathways like Ollie Robinson (Kent) and Emily Windsor (Southern Vipers), it's a mix that works brilliantly.

"Having a professional women's team presents a clear pathway for girls in the surrounding areas to make a real

go at becoming cricketers. Like their idols. And our academies will be a super strength for us in the long run. No doubt.

"Durham has its own DNA. I've worked here long enough to understand, that's a reflection of the coaches and staff here. The people involved in this club are invested emotionally as well as professionally. Understanding that when recruiting players is important, getting players and staff to understand what it means to do it the Durham way.

"That's partly why I'm going to be the Director of Cricket for both the men's and women's teams," North continues, outlining his role as the only person to lead both sides in the country. "We thought about the position as part of the process in applying for Tier 1 status: myself, CEO Tim Bostock and the board felt that I was in the best position to align the leadership within those

structures – in an ideal world it's not forever, we want to bring someone in but right now it's the best thing to do for the club."

He is quick to highlight the impact head coach Dani Hazell had on that decision. "Dani is a Northeast native with bags of experience in the women's game. She's been instrumental in recruitment and building our team from the ground up.

"Where the men's structure has had decades of established pathways to earning a living – and relocation has been a huge part of being a professional cricketer for some time – the women's game is just starting that process.





International representation:

FROM LEFT
Lauren Filer,
Marcus North,
Mark Wood,
Ben Stokes,
Bess Heath,
Brydon Carse and
Mathew Potts.

"There's never been a lot of movement, and I've no doubt this change could be an anxious time for players – but it's also created the opportunity for those players to have a real choice over where they're going to play. Who they're going to play for. And where they're going to live.

"It's a very different place up here, and in moving their lives to the Northeast we have to make that easy for players. Both financially and emotionally. The reality is that the money hasn't been there until now." The plans – which could see an 80 per cent increase in the number of professional female players in England and Wales by 2029 – the ECB says, will further accelerate the growth of women's cricket. That promise comes with the ECB committing a further £3m a year to Tier 1 counties.

"Until recently, there haven't been the resources to sustain growth in a career financially," Marcus continues. "A lot of players are working jobs or putting education above cricket because they need to have careers outside of the game.

"We're in a position now where there's a clear path for contracted players in the UK to earn a sustained living. The hope is that these girls can earn enough money to sustain a progressive lifestyle for 15 years – a privilege the guys have had for decades.

"Making that transition a smooth one is a real priority for us at the moment – the majority of talent will initially come from outside the immediate area. Everyone's relocating and

we have allocated significant resources to support them in that process. Once we get players here, they very rarely leave, it's a great part of the country to live. Which explains why I'm still here some two decades later, I suppose."

Building a life for players away from the Riverside Ground remains a priority for North, but he makes clear that his number one objective at Durham is to produce England players. "Culturally that's something I'm quite passionate about," he continues. "That's how the Australian model works and whilst it's very different

says, rhetorically, the England right-arm quick having joined the club in October. "We're excited to have the opportunity to push her to become one of the best players in world cricket.

"Boasting well-established international players in year zero is brilliant for the younger generation in the squad, and the younger-still talent in pathways. We want to see the next Lauren Filer coming through our system. You can't be what you can't see – that's very much part of having that clear pathway into the first team and an identity as a professional unit.

"I'd hope that's one of the

“If we can replicate international success as well as we have done with the men – with Potts, Stokes, Carse, and Wood – well then we'll be in a good place.

here, the objective for me remains the same."

His is a philosophy that drives from the ground up, "if we can share repeated international success as well as we have done with the men – with Mathew Potts, Ben Stokes, Brydon Carse, Mark Wood et al. making up the bulk of England's pace battery – well then we'll be in a good place.

"It's beneficial for everyone if we contribute to a successful England women's team in all formats. Why has Lauren Filer chosen to come to Durham?" He

reasons the ECB saw us as one of the eight counties to take this new structure forward. Durham is a place where skills and opinions are well supported. And people are put first."

With those closing words, the self-proclaimed Northeastman reiterates that Durham is a special place. "I personally can't wait to see where we can take the club in the next 12 months," he concludes: "In all the six-and-a-half years I've been present in this role, this is by far the most exciting."



ONE PROFESSIONAL GAME FOR ALL

The much-awaited new era of women's cricket is here. As the game takes a giant step into a new tiered system, Luke Reynolds sits down with ECB's **ROB ANDREW** and **BETH BARRETT-WILD** to discuss their aims and ambitions.

THE professionalisation of women's cricket in the country has come a long way since the seeds were first sown in 2014. From 18 centrally contracted England players, it took a further six years before the expansion of 41 additional domestic professional contracts to begin with. Rising every year since, the number will grow to above 140 professional female cricketers come 2025.

As women's cricket enters a new dawn, ECB's Managing Director of the Professional Game, Rob Andrew and

Director of the Women's Professional Game, Beth Barrett-Wild attended the PCA Players' Summit in Paris in October to update and share expected standards and their ambitions for the future surrounding the women's game.

The ECB has one clear goal to come out of the tiering system – to have one professional game running through the counties. Those visions are already in fruition with the domestic men's and women's Vitality Blast and Metro Bank One Day Cup aligning from next year.

The governing body is currently

working on phase two in their roadmap to transform the game in England and Wales. Following the on-field success of the women's game at the regional level, the ECB is prioritising the commercialisation of the sport and expanding the fanbase of the game which keeps rising in popularity.

Andrew and Barrett-Wild talk about having the ambition of seeing a self-sustained women's game in the country over the course of this journey and with big plans ahead to achieve those goals, the future of cricket has never looked brighter in the country.



“We want a combined men’s and women’s sport of cricket in this country that is the envy of other sports.”

ROB ANDREW

How important is the transition of the professional game?

ROB ANDREW: It’s a really important period in the game. The Darwin Project introduced the women’s teams back into the county structure. There’s a real focus within the ECB going forward to ensure that the 18 professional counties are thriving and sustainable and on making sure we make good decisions over the next period.

Sports and cricket in general have got enormous opportunities but there are some challenges as well. We’ve seen financial challenges in other sports, and we just want to be very upfront about what those challenges are and making sure that we’re working together with the PCA to protect the players and working with the professional counties to grow the game.

We’ve got a huge opportunity to

grow the game across men’s and women’s cricket and we just need to be all aligned, which I think is part of our job here to make sure that we’re making good decisions.

Why did the ECB restructure given the success of the women’s regional model?

BETH BARRETT-WILD: The regional model was launched in 2020 with a simple and specific ambition – to professionalise women’s domestic cricket. That was all about investing into the players and getting as many female professional cricketers as quickly as possible. We’ve seen the standard of the women’s game transform through that period. One can see the ability for those players to train and play as full-time professionals which has accelerated the quality of women’s cricket.

Phase two is all about growing the audience, accelerating that passionate fanbase and generating long term value. It’s taking what we’ve built over the first four years of the regional model, which was all about driving the quality of the cricket forwards, and building on this in off-field areas, with a clear focus on accelerating audience growth. Through the first four editions of The Hundred we’ve seen that there is an audience for women’s cricket. We now want to unlock this through the new county-based women’s domestic model.

We’re therefore looking at how we can accelerate and embed the women’s game within the county structures. Taking learnings from The Hundred: how we can really lean into the existing scale and fandom that exists in the men’s game and turbocharge the following for the women’s game.

RIGHT Grace Scrivens
– then of Sunrisers,
now of Essex –
before winning the
Rachael Heyhoe Flint
Trophy in 2024.

FAR RIGHT London
Spirit Women and
Oval Invincibles Men
lift The Hundred
trophy at Lord's.



How confident are you for the success of phase two?

BBW: I'm hugely confident that it's going to be a success. We're still on a journey with it which is a phrase used a lot when we talk about women's sport – this is a long journey that we're on.

We are continuing to invest heavily into professional contracts. Squad sizes across the eight professional women's teams will grow from 10 to 15 professional cricketers. So, we'll have more players on full-time contracts.

Another action that we're taking is that we're increasing the depth of the pyramid. Previously we've had our eight women's regional teams in a flat structure. But through the next period we're launching a Tier 2 that will underpin that and then a Tier 3 meaning all 39 constituent counties of the ECB and across the country will be represented.

I'm really excited about the potential of Tier 2. Through this new layer we are investing significantly into a further 10 county structures, with a focus on areas like specialist coaching and sports science and medicine. This will undoubtedly help to increase the depth of our talent pool, creating a cohesive and connected pathway to support the next generation of professional female cricketers.

I'm hugely optimistic about the

changes that are coming and one of the big things is that this is no longer an isolated or separate women's professional game strategy. This is one professional game strategy, and that's something that looks at everything through both a men's and a women's perspective.

What is the longer-term ambition as one professional game?

RA: There is just one domestic professional game run through the 18 professional counties and making sure that strategically we're all on the same page. The governance of the game is collective in all the decisions that are made.

We haven't touched on the rookie contracts and the minimum salary contracts for men and women which are identical going into next year in cricket. That's unprecedented in sport in this country and probably anywhere in the world.

This means that if you're a young boy or girl, you will have equal opportunities in the pathway across the whole country, equal opportunities when you come out of the pathway academy into your first contract and then ultimately the world is your oyster.

As ex-players, one of the greatest pleasures you get is seeing a future generation of players. I've now seen



about three generations after I played and it's unbelievable to see the talent that is coming out of cricket in this country – boys and girls, into higher levels and taking on the world.

All we're trying to do is make sure that there is a very secure financial environment in which the professional clubs can exist which is why we've got a very clear pro game strategy around producing players, being well run, inclusive and financially sustainable clubs.

We've got to ensure that the domestic level is vibrant. There's a very long history of domestic cricket in this country. It's going through a huge transition, and we've got to make positive decisions in the next 12 to 18 months to grow the sport across both the men's and the women's game.

There are some short-term challenges that we're trying to manage. But if the ECB, PCA and the counties can all row in the same direction then the game has got an enormous future.



I'm hugely optimistic about the changes that are coming. This is no longer a separate game.

BETH BARRETT-WILD



How great is it to be leading the way in parity between the men's and women's game ahead of other sports?

BBW: That equalisation of the entry salary points for men and women as professional cricketers is so powerful. On the day that that was announced, I was inundated with supportive messages from colleagues working in the sports industry, whether it's in the men's or the women's side of the game just being like 'this is unprecedented' and 'wow, this is amazing.'

It is that opportunity that the ECB, PCA and the counties have together. We might not always absolutely agree on everything, but the fact that we do work together, and we are all pulling in the same direction means that we can make decisions like that which we can see are for the benefit of the game.

What is your vision at the end of the next cycle and where do you want to see the women's game?

BBW: I want to see thriving, vibrant and exciting games being played on the field. We've seen that increase year after year through this previous cycle and I want to see that go up another level. I want to see passionate fan bases in full stadiums like a packed Vitality Blast Women's Finals Day at a big iconic venue like the Kia Oval.

So, it's around everything – from the playing standards on the field to how many people are falling in love with the women's game.

Then ultimately when we go back to the finances. We have a big job to do around the commercial sustainability of the women's game which is a big jigsaw piece which isn't going to be an easy fix. But I'm confident that we've got the right ingredients going into the mix to get to that as an output in the end.

From a collective professional game, at the end of the cycle where would you like to see the men's and women's game?

RA: We want to see genuine growth which you can actually see. But it's also in the numbers, and over the last four

years this has really grown.

Combining the men's and the women's professional game in any sport is a hugely important part of the future. And in terms of growing those audiences, interest from sponsors and television, this is where the growth is at and it's through the women's game, so we've got to ensure that we take it at the right pace. We want a combined men's and women's sport of cricket in this country that actually is the envy of other sports.

Where do you think the game can go? What could be the next step going forward?

BBW: To have as many female professional cricketers on contracts as their male counterparts. However, it does come back to sold out stadiums resulting from the following and the fandom. We've got the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup here in England and Wales which will be another lightning rod through that audience growth ambition.

It also comes down to commercial sustainability. Women's cricket generating meaningful revenue and being sustainable. If we can get to that point within the next 10 years, everybody will have done an incredible job.

WHAT THE PLAYERS THINK

Continuing the exploration into the new era of women's cricket, Beyond the Boundaries speaks to three players about what the changing structure means to them. First up, it's Durham's Emily Windsor who is walking home after netting with England captain Ben Stokes.

EMILY WINDSOR SOUTHERN VIPERS — DURHAM

It feels colder up in Durham than it was in Hampshire but that doesn't take away from the fantastic setup they have here. Leaving the Southern Vipers, where I contributed to building a family legacy is bittersweet, but I'm excited to start this new chapter in the Northeast.

I still have questions around how Tier 2 is going to work, with new teams entering Tier 1 next year but the potential this new structure has to professionalise the game is undeniable.

The squad is made up of a diaspora of players from different backgrounds, everyone is in the same boat with relocating but that's part and parcel of being a professional cricketer. In speaking to Marcus North and Dani Hazell it's clear that the culture we're building is a special one – even at this early stage.

My week so far has been fantastic; netting next to Ben Stokes the obvious cherry on top, receiving technical advice from him and Paul Collingwood is invaluable, and personifies the benefits of this new structure. It's a real case of learning from the best. And striving to be the best. The Vitality Blast double-headers will play a huge part in that.

The facilities are amazing, the kit we received is gorgeous with names and numbers all stitched on. The best thing so far being my big thick coat. I've needed it. I just can't wait to get started.

Technical advice from Ben Stokes and Paul Collingwood is invaluable, and personifies the benefits of this new structure.





PAIGE SCHOLFIELD

SOUTH EAST STARS — **SURREY**



Since the first whispers from PCA Reps about the proposed new structure, I've believed in its potential. Now, being part of Surrey's professional setup, it truly feels like progress for women's cricket.

Such a setup has clearly worked so well in The Hundred, it shows that if teams are provided with the right resources, you can get the very best out of them – and the crowds follow. A lot of the girls are happy with the decision the ECB and PCA have helped develop.

My time at the South East Stars was brilliant, the staff at Beckenham were absolutely

fantastic, I couldn't ask for more. But being split between two counties – Kent and Surrey – made it difficult logistically. We didn't have a home and would often have to bring in our own lunches. Where the men would have three course meals I was sat eating wraps from Tupperware.

It's those one-percenters that I think we'll benefit from most in the new system. Already at the Oval, the food has been fantastic, and the rehab support world-class. Once the construction of new changing facilities is finished the setup will be one of the best in the world. These are exciting times.

“Now, being part of Surrey's professional setup, it truly feels like progress for women's cricket.”

EVE JONES

CENTRAL SPARKS —LANCASHIRE

It felt like the first day of school rocking up on Monday morning, having spent a bit of time in Manchester a few years back it's great seeing familiar faces in this professional setup.

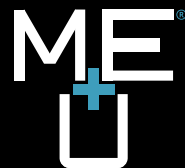
The county has led the way with facilities and support available to the women's team – who have been training and playing at Old Trafford for some time now. Simple touches, like having my name on my locker, have made me feel welcomed and part of an exciting squad. I've never had that before.

Listening to the ECB at the recent PCA Summit in Paris and collaborating as Player Reps, it's crucial that we continue to push for improvements. Ensuring that issues such as maternity pay remain on the ECB's agenda, with the PCA's support, is essential.

With two competitions now aligning with the men's calendar, this new structure will elevate us into the spotlight, all helped by a stronger presence on social media and more funding on the whole. It's down to us players now to provide entertaining cricket and inspire people to tune in.

I feel welcomed and part of an exciting squad. I've never had that before.





The choice of professionals

A black and white photograph of three individuals, two women and one man, wearing ME+ baseball caps. They are looking towards the camera with serious expressions. Below them are four images of ME+ sneakers: Men's Astro, Women's All Rounder, Men's All Rounder, and Men's Bowler. Each shoe is white with blue and green accents and features the ME+ logo on the side.

Men's Astro Women's All Rounder Men's All Rounder Men's Bowler

meplusu.co.uk

BORN TO RUN

ANDY AFFORD caught up with **ALEC STEWART** to talk about what amounts to a lifetime spent in the game.

“Trust is a big thing with me...” states, by any measure, one of England’s greatest ever cricketers. “It takes me some time to get comfortable with people. And part of that is that I’m very much my own man.” It’s an emphatic start. But expectations were nothing less. Alec Stewart is famously straightforward.

We are sat in what looks like a busy and as a result somewhat untidy office. High in the pavilion at the Kia Oval, it’s something between a functioning and



Alec Stewart
in familiar
surroundings...
The Kia Oval,
October 2024.

I'd only do it if I could do it my way, and I wanted to be judged on that alone.

functional meeting room and a stack-it-everywhere storage cupboard. The only signifier of its importance as the club's cricketing nerve centre is the gravitas of the person we're in the presence of, sat in the office's prime corner, and the massive Surrey crest etched into the glass at the side of the door.

It's an unmemorable late October afternoon. In this equally low-key space. Outside, the insect-like motorised heat lamps are crawling slowly over the outfield, in use to promote new grass growth on what looks like a fairly-recently reseeded outer.

To our right, redevelopment is well underway within the framework of the famous gasometer; the structure that continues to dominate the northern side of the ground. A circular apartment block is being assembled within the gasholder's otherwise distinctive skeleton. Made from what will undoubtedly be listed-status ironmongery. Having been in situ since 1853. And further to the east is a gap in the ground's overlooking houses, the space now vacated by the recently demolished Cricketers pub. A building that, although derelict since 2002, has stood in that spot since 1826. Change is clearly all around.

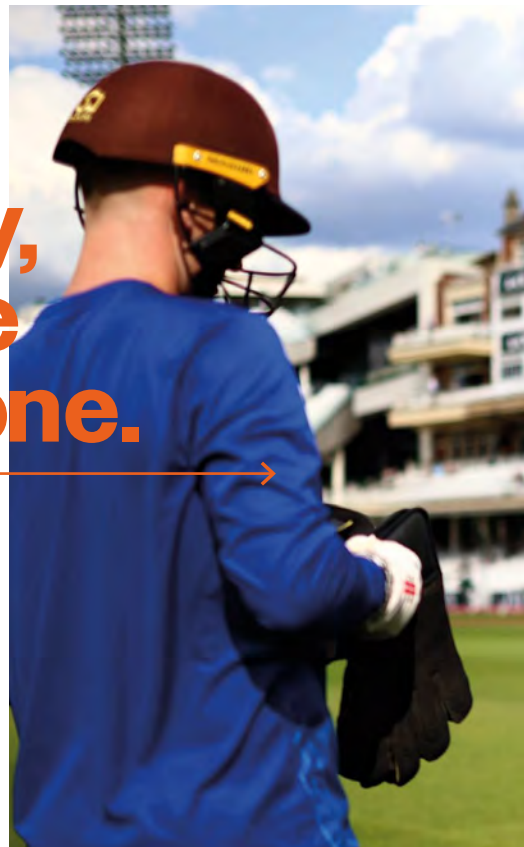
To that end, Stewart has announced

he is stepping down from his role as Surrey's Director of Cricket. In order to support wife, Lynn, as she undergoes ongoing treatment for secondary breast cancer. It is something he's spoken about, with the role of running the household – rather than this powerhouse of English domestic cricket – being something, he says, he will give his best to, without the expectation of achieving any great success. In that – as a man of a certain age – I'm sure he isn't alone.

And that age is 61. Again, by all accounts, Stewart is a 06.30-in-the-gym kind of guy. Getting the work done without impacting on the time set aside for others and not detracting from doing his job to the best of his ability. And physically, despite the hair thinning slightly, and the blond greying to silver, he broadly looks the same as when sporting his trademark upturned collar, stood over the stumps for England.

He is, as you might expect of a man of convention, dressed wholly appropriately for a person of his age and status. But still modern enough to somewhat blend in with the cricketers, whose progress he has overseen. And has done so to great effect.

Surrey has won the last three County Championship titles. The club's best run since the seven-season spell of



dominance in the 1950s. And in recent times a period only rivalled – in terms of impact on the county scene and England front – by Yorkshire's back-to-back efforts in 2014 and '15. Then under the stewardship of Martyn Moxon. A much-admired Stewart peer.

The recent three-peat came after 'The Gaffer', as he was known during his playing days, had delivered the club its first Championship title for 28 years in 2018. That arrived after his return to the Oval, coming about in the wake of the turmoil caused by the club's relegation to the second division in 2014. "When I came back to Surrey, I said that it was a three-year project," states this MBE (1998) and OBE (2003) winner. "There were players I wanted to move on and others to bring in. And I said that I'd only take on the job in that context. Under those conditions. I said to the club that



Alec Stewart with Josh Black and Ben Foakes ahead of a Vitality Blast fixture against Middlesex.

I'd only do it if I could do it my way, and I wanted to be judged on that, and that alone. And to be fair to them – at least for 95 per cent of the time – that's what has happened. And has continued to happen. Right up until now."

But this reported shift in focus from work to home isn't the end of the road for the Stewart connection at the Oval. As dynasties go, Alec followed his dad, Micky, as both a player and team boss. And Stewart Junior will remain on in an influential but reduced role as the county's high-performance cricket advisor. Which, according to Alec, will amount to around 40 days a year. In the process sustaining more than 40 years of ongoing personal and professional service and association.

"When I started here as Director of Cricket it was much different," he states, having now returned from having his

photo taken at the front of the pavilion. Whose steps bear his dad's famous name. "Graham Ford came in as head coach –

I think we had one physio – maybe two other people – but definitely no analyst. If you look across at the wall..." Stewart points to the heavily annotated whiteboard

Stewart captains England against South Africa at Edgbaston.



planner opposite. "That block of names at the bottom – however many there are (consensus being 16) – is the support team now. That's what it takes to deliver at the level we do."

First on the Surrey staff in 1981. Stewart played to a brilliant conclusion a cricket career of more than a thousand professional appearances. Of that number, 133 were Tests. A record at the time. With his last ever being the final instalment in a 303-game run for England. Stage managed to conclude at the Oval in 2003. During that long career, as a batter he remained throughout a fierce cutter and puller of the ball, and with the gloves on; ever reliable and tidy.

Exiting the game when still at the top, and aged 40, he went on to work for a period for the company, Arundel Promotions, alongside former Crystal Palace manager Alan Smith. Splitting his time between player representation and media work. Where, on principle, Stewart wouldn't rejoin the Surrey ranks until any and all of those existing contracts and commitments had lapsed.

Speaking of those early days in charge. "To win, back then, things had to change," sets out Stewart emphatically.

"I challenged the groundsman to show everyone – and I believed it was true – that he was the best in the world. I wanted to move the pitches away from being good, but with the potential for too many draws. To being fast and bouncy.

South Africa's Morne Morkel proved the catalyst for that first success in 2018, alongside those changes in surfaces.

"Also, having benefitted myself from multiple trips to Perth in Western Australia, I set about formalising the process of sending our young players – particularly batters – to the coaches and clubs which I believed would bring them

on. As it had for me. We now also send players to Queensland and Pakistan as part of their progression. All with weekly check-ins. I believe that being able to play well off the back foot is a measure of a player.”

His squad-building approach, he says, was based around the reduction of the games to its constituent parts. Effectively, he’s describing the commodotisation of runs and wickets. After researching and then deciding on the number of each was required over the course of a season to win matches, and by turn championships, he says that he set about adding players capable of delivering them. Against likely probability. All of the time maintaining Surrey’s standing and history as a club capable of growing their own players. Both for Surrey’s benefit. And for England.

“I believed then and still believe now that it’s important to have the core of the squad developed by the club,” he says, again emphatically. “I know we are better off than most in that regard. We have a good catchment area, a good network of coaches and also a good number of public schools that also afford scholarship players access to the contact time and facilities that make a huge difference in the development of talent. As well as a fixture list of competition over the summer, played on excellent pitches, there for players to develop their game on.

“I know it doesn’t sound very nice – we are talking about privilege here – but overwhelmingly the young players benefitting from these opportunities aren’t from privileged backgrounds. They’re just ordinary young people identified as having the right level of ability and the right attitude to make the most of the opportunity.”

As a huge follower of football, Stewart speaks of Alex Ferguson as an all-round mentor, inspiration, and influence in building the club up in his image. “We needed the Oval to become a fortress.



Like Old Trafford was for Ferguson. With a maximum of eight home games, I moved us away from Guildford – which is lovely and a place I have real affection for – but we held no advantage as one of what was only a handful of home matches. From there, it has been down to the players delivering.”

If that was the job when he took it on, what’s different now as he steps down? With the question comes a swift, one-word reply. “Franchises,” he says, even more emphatically than before. “The onset of franchise cricket is the biggest challenge in the job, and also you’d have to say, one of the biggest opportunities for the players. When I started as director of cricket there was the IPL to contend with in the summer and the Big Bash in the winter. That isn’t the case now. Knowing who you’re going to have, who is available, and for how many games, has been a constant challenge.

“We’ve tried to be fair to the players. I know we’re known as ‘Moneybags Surrey’, but I’m also a big one for the individual earning that money we pay them. And not us just handing it over. If players do well for the club, we reward them. But only if I feel they’ve earned it.”

Stewart continues, “the finance department here will tell you how I treat



Alec Stewart through the years...

FROM TOP Stewie signs autographs at the Oval; England vs India at Trent Bridge, August 2002; An ODI against Australia in 2001.

ABOUT STEWIE

April 8, 1963, Merton, SURREY

A dominant batter, the right-hander represented England from 1989-2003, playing against Pakistan in the 1992 World Cup final and captaining the national team in 15 Tests and 41 ODIs from 1998 to 1999.

WICKETKEEPER-BATTER SURREY & ENGLAND

19 INTERNATIONAL HUNDREDS

73 INTERNATIONAL FIFTIES

133 TESTS PLAYED

8,463 TEST RUNS

39.54 TEST AVERAGE

190 TEST BEST

V PAKISTAN, BIRMINGHAM, 1992

263 CATCHES

14 STUMPINGS

170 ODIs PLAYED

4,677 ODI RUNS

31.60 ODI AVERAGE

116 ODI BEST

V INDIA, SHARJAH, 1997

159 ODI CATCHES

15 ODI STUMPINGS



“If something needs doing, I’ll trust myself to do it over anyone else.”



the cricket budget as if it's my own money. And a Director of Cricket should always be looking to add to the squad. And whilst I appreciate that we're able – if we want to – to operate somewhere near the top of the salary cap, we could spend more on player wages than we do. But we choose not to. Well, I chose not to. And I know that's a privileged position to be in. Especially compared to many of the other counties, where they're not necessarily competing for titles on all fronts like we are. And on that, I think that Leicestershire seeing Josh Hull capped by England should be a real measure of success for them – and any club. It's certainly what we've always tried to do here. Win titles and

provide players for England.”

Stewart continues talking about the players at Surrey. The restoration to form of Rory Burns, the emergence of Dom Sibley as a more-attacking batting presence, and of someone he describes as the most skillful bowler in England; Dan Worrall. The 33-year-old Victorian is eligible for England in 2025, with Stewart signing the fast bowler from Gloucestershire on the endorsement of South Africa's Hashim Amla, after facing him when playing as Surrey's overseas player at the time.

He also talks about how he sets about mitigating the challenge of having his players' heads turned by the opportunity to earn their money as global freelancers, rather than staff players. “I try to make what we offer here at Surrey attractive in the medium and longer-term, rather than like the short-term quick cash opportunities of the franchises,” before pausing mid thought. “They tend to be more volatile opportunities. Firings and hirings are quick and often. Made especially easy because new coaches, when they come in, under the influence of their team owners, are picking from a global roster of players in their thousands, rather than a pool of around 300 professionals in the UK. And with all of them needing to be successful quickly to keep their jobs or maintain their business value. It's pressurised. A bad fortnight and you're done.

“We offer stability. I try and set out the reality. That should a player go off and decide to play all over the world, we make them understand that not contracting to Surrey comes with consequences. That's focused around them being able to plan their lives more consistently, which is important if you have personal responsibilities. We are a stable and successful proposition for the 28 players, or around that number, that we want to contract.”

We finish with a question about him

as a boss. What is he like to work for?

“Well, you'll have to ask other people that, but I will say that I'm a self-sorter. But as I stated earlier, as the game has changed and evolved, and the job with it, that has been less and less doable. Practically.

“I've got better over time on consulting with coaches around the players they're happy to let go and those they would like to keep working with. I've always tried to base the job around best practice, across sport, and not just cricket. And over the years I've tried to involve more people on more things and more decisions, but by nature, if something needs doing, I'll trust myself to do it over anyone else. Like I said, I'm a self-sorter.”

And with that, we're done. Chelsea is playing this evening he states smiling broadly. In what was the old League Cup. Against Newcastle. It's well known that he has always been a huge fan of the Londoners. “I wore No.4 for England because John Hollins had the same shirt at Chelsea. He was my hero growing up.” Stewart continues as handshakes are administered, saying he also has a committee meeting to plan for this evening. This time with more of a knowing wink than a smile, he says that he'll be dialing in rather than attending in person. Partly to be at home to help out, but partly to keep an eye on how the Blues might be faring ‘up the toon’. “I have my brother-in-law with us at the weekend,” he concludes warmly with a bit more football. “And I've said how much we're all looking forward to seeing everyone, but between four-thirty and six-thirty I'll be watching the Chelsea v United game. And that, whatever else we might be doing in between, is a non-negotiable.” With expectations set and no doubt met, we're done.



COUNTRY, COUNTY & COMMUNITY UNITE

PCA England Legends events are a real celebration of cricket, seeing the grassroots and elite games coming together in a truly unique way. The Legends squad of former international stars are on hand for showcase matches, fundraising tournaments and inclusive masterclasses to entertain and inspire.

For more information about hosting the Legends at your club or company, or for details on current sponsorship opportunities, please contact pcalegends@thepca.co.uk

OH WHAT A NIGHT

Held at the Troxy for a second consecutive year, the cinch PCA Awards is the pinnacle of cricketing honours in England & Wales, rewarding players for their outstanding contributions both on & off the field.



Celebrating the end of yet another scintillating summer of cricket, past and present players, partners, and stakeholders joined in East London for the 55th edition of the glamorous cinch PCA Awards back in October. The 500-person event recognised the finest cricketers over the last 12 months.

Liam Dawson has been in contention for winning the cinch PCA Men's Player of the Year in seasons gone by and 2024 was the year when the Hampshire all-rounder finally claimed the ultimate prize.

Welcomed on the stage by eye-catching pyrotechnics and a live on-stage band, Dawson expressed his amazement by saying, "I was very

surprised, but I am delighted, it's a real highlight of my career and a very special award to win. I had a strong season last year but to have an even better season this year, really tops it off."

For Scotland captain Kathryn Bryce, the cinch PCA Women's Player of the Year was one of the proudest moments of her professional career. The Blaze star capped off an excellent year by playing a vital role in guiding her side to their first Charlotte Edwards Cup title.

"It's a massive honour to win this trophy seeing the names that have won

it before and knowing that it's been voted for by fellow players," said Bryce after topping the polls against Hollie Armitage, Paige Scholfield and Nat Sciver-Brunt.

Jamie Smith and Ryana MacDonald-Gay meanwhile were the recipients of the cinch PCA Men's Young Player of the Year and cinch PCA Women's Young Player of the Year respectively.

Significant sums were also raised for the Cricketers' Trust, while a highlight for many was the standing ovation received by Matthew Maynard as he collected his Outstanding Contribution Award, courtesy of Official PCA Trophy Partner Mappin & Webb. Oh, what a night indeed.





Live from the Troxy, players attend the 2024 cinch PCA Awards.



WINNERS ARE GRINNERS

KATHRYN BRYCE

cinch PCA Women's Player of the Year

LIAM DAWSON

cinch PCA Men's Player of the Year

RYANA MACDONALD-GAY

cinch PCA Women's Young Player of the Year

JAMIE SMITH

cinch PCA Men's Young Player of the Year

MATTHEW MAYNARD

PCA Outstanding Contribution Award

HARRY BROOK & LAUREN BELL

Rado Recognition Award

JAMES ANDERSON

ECB Special Merit

NEIL BANTON

PCA Umpire of the Year – Men's Game

ANNA HARRIS

PCA Umpire of the Year – Women's Game

RIGHT
cinch PCA Women's Young Player of the Year, Ryana MacDonald-Gay collects her award.



BELOW
Matthew Maynard receives his PCA Outstanding Contribution Award.





BEARD BOWLED OVER BY *Inclusion Award*

Former Essex bowler Aaron Beard is the inaugural recipient of a personally engraved silver-plated victory wreath-edge bowl from Mappin & Webb after being named the national PCA Inclusion Award winner.

Created for the first time in 2024, eight regional winners of the PCA Inclusion Award were recognised by their clubs with a PCA panel deciding Beard as the player who has had the biggest impact on inclusion within the past 12 months across the counties.

The 27-year-old retired at the end of the 2024 season but had been involved at Essex since the age of 11 with a strong local connection to the club.

The former seamer impressed the panel with his selfless acts during the year donating his time to various Essex Cricket initiatives

which included supporting the disability programme, girls cricket and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Beard was surprised and pleased to receive the award: "It feels great, it was a bit of a shock to the system, but it was really nice to hear the news and for the judges to recognise me as the sort of person that cares about inclusion, I'm very happy with that.

"Inclusion is why I played cricket, to be a part of an enjoyable and happy environment where people stick together through the good and bad times. When I coach the kids at different levels and abilities, I always say the fundamental thing is to enjoy it. Skills improve when people are happy, included and enjoying cricket.

"I've learnt that I was missing certain things from the latter stages of my career and not enjoying it as much, by taking a step back you realise the main thing is to enjoy yourself and be happy."

On major T20 match days, Beard could often be seen leading the players through post-game signing sessions to ensure every young person got to meet their heroes for autographs and pictures and was described as 'an incredible ambassador for Essex County Cricket Club both on and off the field'.





Mappin & Webb
LONDON

MEMBERS
CHRISTMAS
OFFER

A LUXURY EXPERIENCE

Corporate Sales Executive,
Ben Pickles explores the
lasting relationship between
Mappin & Webb and the PCA.



In 2021, Mappin and Webb and the PCA began a partnership forged around shared values and continual collaboration.

As the corporate sales team's newest recruit, I've been inspired by the PCA's commitment to personal development and have witnessed first-hand Mappin and Webb's ability to go 'beyond the boundaries,' investing in lasting relationships over mere transactions. Over the last two years, Mappin and Webb have had the privilege of nurturing our partnership with the PCA. And as a token of our appreciation, **we are offering members of the PCA a**

Christmas discount of 10% off all Swiss watches and 15% of jewellery (exclusions apply). We pride ourselves on delivering a VIP luxury experience to each and every customer, regardless of status or accolade, ensuring every client feels like Player of the Year upon entry. We tailor each experience to the individual, ensuring the utmost respect and care while going above and beyond to meet your needs. Your trust in us is our priority, and it is our goal to deliver a seamless memorable experience. If it's of importance to you, it's important to us. As a sport enthusiast, I will always admire what it takes to succeed at sports – the

attention to detail, dedication, patience, craftsmanship and ability to thrive under. I do however, say with great pride and certainty that my team strive to exercise these values with every PCA award we manufacture.

Working closely with the Crown Jeweller and our proprietary jewellery workshops has shown me the only boundaries within the industry are those outside of your imagination. This shared creativity lays the foundation for a partnership I hope will endure for years to come as we continue to produce the finest trophies and celebrate the most prestigious cricket grounds across the nation.



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TAKING CONTROL

Showcasing cricketers building careers beyond the pitch. BtB kicks things off with **TOM CURRAN**, who shares his story of building coffee brand Naked Ground alongside brother Sam.



Tom Curran's career began with Surrey in 2014 and has seen him play both internationally – two Tests, 28 ODIs, and 30 T20Is – and with any number of global franchises. Taking in myriad cricketing ports of call that include

☞ Getting the product right. Developing the coffees' profiles. It's all part of developing that brand.

Kolkata Knight Riders, Rajasthan Royals, Sydney Sixers, and Trinbago Knight Riders. Plus Surrey and the Oval Invincibles more locally.

"It was the exposure to coffee as a lifestyle choice that sowed the seeds," or beans, of an idea for Naked Ground, says the bowling all-rounder. "I'd get up in the morning in Sydney, for example, and there would be places open, serving coffee from five-thirty in the morning. A wholly different experience to the UK.

"I guess it's a lifestyle brand we're building, and it has been three years in the making. I'm not saying that it started in Ibiza by accident, but that is ultimately where it all began. And I can't really think why, or why not but that coffee shop in the Balearics has become the backbone of the brand."

Curran is in business with younger

brother, Sam. Both are brand advocates and lifestyle devotees, supported and guided by a close circle of advisors.

"I work on the business every day. We also have a health club in Cardiff that we now own, a hub shaping Naked Ground as a well-being brand. Our coffee trucks sell coffee at cricket and rugby stadiums throughout the year, no matter the season. Or event." The 29-year-old says, having stationed at Harlequin's Twickenham Stoop and the Oval most recently.

"I describe it as a family business. And there was definitely a time when I saw Sam (26) very much as someone to look after when we were younger. But he's now definitely his own man. I feel super blessed to have the relationship I do with him. On and off the field."

Naked Ground promote a range of three coffees from around the globe,



COACH CASTLE

Balancing professional cricket with a master's degree in psychology, coaching with Essex, and setting up her own business, Kelly Castle does it all. And she's only 27.

"Coaching twice a week with Essex's academy squad has been an amazing way to develop my skills. The commitment amounts to about six hours of contact each week. Working with an experienced team, including Darren Stevens as fast-bowling coach, means I'm constantly learning. Both as a player and a coach.

"Life outside of playing cricket offers a valuable break from focusing solely on my own performances – which can be all-consuming for lots of players. As a fast-bowling all-rounder, my flexibility and drilling various aspects of the game is what I love most – batting, bowling, and fielding – spin being the only discipline I tend to avoid. I'm hopeless at that.

"As part of a group of four women who earned their level three badges, I began coaching through an apprenticeship with Essex at university. Growing up without a

ABOVE
Tom and Sam Curran work their way through a photoshoot at HQ.

BELOW
Tom Curran playing for the Oval Invincibles during The Hundred in August 2023.



sourced by the business. They also offer other well-being drinks and products that include some, described by Curran, "beautiful loose-leaved teas from India", as well as mushroom-based chaga crystals sourced from Siberia.

"Thinking what I might do after my playing days was brought into sharp focus during the time I've had out of the game. Injuries have been part of the process, definitely. Over the years I have seen lots of players come and go – all over the world – these are people that played the game like they thought they would play forever. But the ability to build something whilst I was playing seemed a good use of downtime. Getting the product right. Developing the coffees' profiles. It's all part of developing that brand. And people are ever-increasingly actively seeking good coffee."

Coaching offers a valuable break from focusing solely on my performances.

female coach or accessible role model, it was hard to see cricket as a career. Being that role model for girls in a similar position drives my decisions on and off the field. I want to offer them something I didn't have.

"Launching my own coaching business this winter, I've been conducting one-to-one sessions with clients ranging from club cricketers to those already in academy pathways. I love working with people and hope to integrate this with my master's in psychology – which I also started in September. It's a real opportunity to give back to the game I love.

"I've done much of the leg work myself but having the PCA as a sounding board is an invaluable resource.

It's been hectic recently, but I am loving every part of it."

Kelly Castle, then of Sunrisers, plays a cut shot during the Charlotte Edwards Cup 2022.



SECOND CAREERS

PCA Futures Week has explored career progression stories from the PCA membership, as players look to enhance their personal development. Here's how the two-day event went down.

As the flagship event of Futures Week, November's PCA Futures Conference at St George's Park allowed players to learn from industry experts about careers after cricket. With former Nottinghamshire Bowler Luke Fletcher at 36 years old being the grown-up of the group, the conference was also attended by 20-year-old Scotland international and the youngest ever attendee, Olivia Bell.

Speaking to the PCA, the right-arm off-break bowler said that: "Despite being at the start of my career, it's important I think about things to do alongside cricket. After seeing such positive feedback from 2023's conference I had to see what it was all about.

"The PCA has been brilliant in putting on speakers (Paul Shaw, Phoebe Graham, Rich Morris and Will Jefferson), who have been exceptional, bringing a real breadth of knowledge across different industries."

Members took part in workshops, activities, and discussions, helping

Despite being at the start of my career, it's important I think about things to do alongside cricket.

players find their future careers and make the transition a smooth one. Considering the average age a player is released from the game is under 26, in the last 12 months, Personal Development Managers have recorded 4,870 meetings with 785 current and former players, personal development being a key topic discussed.

The PCA funds 50 per cent of individual personal development courses up to a maximum of £1,500.

From taster courses to full-time degrees, get in touch with your regional PDM to speak about preferred course providers and find out more about funding options.



GET BOWLED OVER BY OUR **CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

At Hays, we understand the unique strengths former athletes bring to the world of work – and know that cricketers excel at the long game. We won't just find you a job, but help you catch a new career.

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**For more information,
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or call 07956 209526**

BOB'S LASTING LEGACY

The **BOB WILLIS** Fund plans to build on the success of PCA's annual event, with the health of former cricketers at the forefront of the prostate cancer charity.

When near 100 PCA members gathered for the annual PCA Past Player Day in June, it was an England legend that dominated proceedings with the legacy of Bob Willis present through a series of health checks for his former peers.

Visit Worcestershire New Road was the venue for former players to catch up with their friends and foes against the backdrop of the County Championship fixture between Worcestershire and Surrey.

In partnership with The Bob Willis Fund, 30 members had their prostate checked, all thankfully returning a negative outcome. However, not all men are lucky, as one in eight men are diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Named after the legendary England bowler, the Bob Willis Fund partnered with the PCA with one goal in mind – to make sure that former cricketers get their prostate checked due to its high diagnostic rate.

With the summer event kickstarting the partnership, the Fund wants the day of testing to be an inspiration for county teams' past players' associations to expand their reach to more former cricketers and aid them in diagnosing prostate cancer at the earliest opportunity.

The Fund's Co-Founder and Advisor Adam Askew has lofty ambitions to increase awareness and testing amongst former cricketers. "We would encourage any past player association to get in touch with us if they were interested in hosting a similar awareness day with their own ex-players," he said.

"Dr Jyoti Shah is a Urological Surgeon at North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust. With her, we can not only offer really fantastic advice, support and awareness about prostate cancer but also enable the possibility of doing on-site testing."

The 2025 summer plans to be big for the Fund, with India touring England for a five-match Test series where The

It is a fantastic fit bringing together two cricket organisations who care deeply about the lives of professional cricketers, both past and present.

ADAM ASKEW





Visit Worcestershire
New Road played host
to PCA Past Player
Day in June 2024.



Mark Butcher,
host for the day,
Dr Joyoti Shah,
Katie Willis and
a member of PSA
testing team.

Bob Willis Fund hopes to host another #BlueForBob Day at Edgbaston, making it an important event in the cricketing calendar. The Fund also aims to utilise the tourists appeal as an excellent opportunity to partner with the Asian community to spread awareness about prostate cancer.

Amongst its increasing number of partnerships, the Bob Willis Fund intends to remain a stony ally of the PCA. Askew added, "Bob died of prostate cancer in 2019. The Bob Willis Fund is a legacy we hoped never to do, but cricket was his life and is now helping us to save other men's lives and fight the cruel disease, which is the most common cancer in men.

"We want the partnership to continue with the PCA. It is a fantastic fit bringing together two cricket organisations who care deeply about the lives of professional cricketers, both past and present."

The PCA Past Player Day will return in 2025 with further details to be shared in due course.



ABOVE
Adam Askew and
the wider team
pose ahead of the
PSA tests being
returned to the
lab via motorbike
courier.



For more information
about getting tested
for prostate cancer,
the Fund and to donate visit
BOBWILLISFUND.ORG

A DEEP DIVE

into the fluctuations of cricketers' mental health



The Institute for Psychology of Elite Performance (IPEP) at Bangor University has completed ‘the most comprehensive investigation into cricketer mental health to date’ with the support of the PCA and ECB.

The mental health of cricketers is an aspect of the game that has risen to prominence more and more in recent years. With additional players speaking out, this allows the PCA and the Cricketers' Trust to better tailor their services to the needs of those players.

This longitudinal study, a collaboration between Bangor University, the PCA and ECB took a deep dive into the mental health of male cricketers over a three-year period, measuring a range of factors including depression, anxiety, gambling, alcohol, and wellbeing at discrete time points

throughout every year: pre-season, mid-season and off-season.

Academic, George Ely, a Postdoctoral Researcher at Bangor University, described the research as ‘the most comprehensive longitudinal investigation into cricketer mental health to date’. The study collected data from 502 male participants, with 115 players providing enough data to be included in longitudinal analysis.

The stigma around poor mental health in cricketer comes from various sources, Ely explains the reasons behind the media portrayal of cricket having a mental health issue.

“High profile players have spoken about mental health challenges and then the media jump on that and suggest you don’t hear about this in other sports, so cricket must have a problem.

“Actually, the opposite may be true in that the unique nature of these narratives has been a positive in reducing stigma across the game, allowing others to seek support earlier and be more comfortable to speak out and support those that might be struggling. There’s lots of other sports that will have players with poor mental health but not as many have spoken about it, probably because they’re not supported as well as those in cricket.”

So, is there a mental health crisis in cricket? Ely explores the results from the research: “The simplistic takeaway from our research is that cricketers’

Research has shown that a range of mostly unavoidable aspects of being a cricketer can contribute to anxiety.

mental health is as good as, if not better than, the general population but there are periods in a season where it changes. For example, depression levels are higher during the season than they are during the off-season - but you're still better off being a cricketer than not, from a mental health perspective." Additionally, research from Ely has found that during the season wellbeing is tied to form and that as the season progresses players perceive their wellbeing to decrease.

The majority of the players in the study have an off-season and the Bangor research team postulate that it is during this period that player mental health is able to reset and return to a baseline before the season begins. However, with the increased number of players involved in tournaments year-round, Ely expressed his concern that the growing nature of a 12 month-a-year game, with the off-season essentially removed, could detrimentally impact long-term player mental health.

From an anxiety perspective, the findings indicate that at any given time approximately 3.5% of male players are likely to be experiencing

some form of anxiety disorder. Whilst this is in line with males in the general population, statistically speaking it means on average there's likely at least one player in the dressing room who would benefit from seeking anxiety-related support.

"Research has shown that a range of mostly unavoidable aspects of being a cricketer can contribute to anxiety. For example, coming to the end of a contract or being injured are things most players will encounter and have been associated with feelings of anxiety. What's important is that people going through these difficult periods are appropriately supported," commented Ely.

The lead researcher concluded that the data indicates cricketers are well supported by their national governing body and from their proactive players' union. Whilst there are improvements that can be made, cricketers' environments are moving in the right direction and all parties are working together to develop mental health as a primary point on the agenda.

A similar study is on-going into the mental health of women's cricketers and is in the research phase, Professor Ross Roberts of Bangor University is looking forward reviewing the results: "This work is just the start, we are really excited to keep working across both the women's and men's game and are pleased Bangor University can play a part in supporting cricketers mental health in collaboration with the PCA and ECB."

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WHAT'S NEXT?

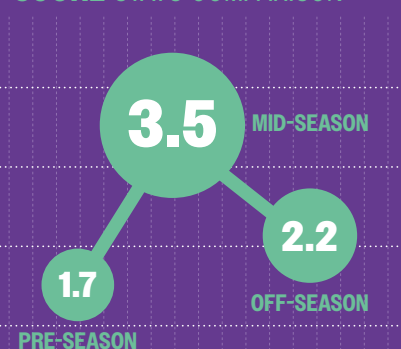
Considering this extensive research, the PCA has created the 'Be Well, Play Well' series which will enable players to take proactive steps to improving their mental health and wellbeing. Using content informed by this study, alongside extensive insight from experts, the programme will be facilitated by PCA Wellbeing Champions, consisting of current and former players, who will deliver sessions across all professional squads. The workshops will ensure players are dedicating time to life outside of cricket, focussing on creating a healthy work-life balance.

502 PLAYERS DATA
COLLECTED

23 MEAN AGE OF
PLAYERS SURVEYED

9 COLLECTION DATA POINTS

YEAR TWO DEPRESSION SCORE STATS COMPARISON



*Male general population mean depression score is 2.7 taken from pre pandemic data. Estimated that the general population mean depression score is currently higher.



David Lawrence poses for a photo during his interview with the Cricketers' Trust ahead of Finals Day.

DAVID LAWRENCE LIFE WITH MND

Former England and Gloucestershire bowler David 'Syd' Lawrence shares his story of resilience in the face of "the sadistic disease."

If Gloucestershire's spirit needed any further inspiration during Finals Day 2024, there was no better frontman than the figure of club President David Lawrence. Watching both games at Edgbaston from his wheelchair in the PCA's box, never-give-up Syd's presence at both games was cited by captain Jack Taylor as the defining factor in the county's first Vitality Blast win.

Gloucestershire County Cricket Club announced that the 60-year-old was diagnosed with motor neurone disease

in June 2024. Their appearance at Finals Day – for only the fourth time in the competition's 21-year history – had been accompanied by an appeal from the Cricketers' Trust. Lawrence spoke movingly in a video about his MND diagnosis, recorded prior, broadcast to the nation.

"It was the hardest day of my life," he told the Trust during recording that video – with Finals Day having supported the players' charity for the fifth year in succession. The conversation had to be paused so his wife Gaynor could wipe the tears from his face. But nothing would stop the 60-year-old's fight and desire to tell his story.

Having formed one of the most feared attacks in county cricket on the field, Lawrence is a man mountain off it too, and until five years ago was still

competing on stage as a bodybuilder. He now sits in a support chair bespoke to his needs – a chair funded by the Cricketers' Trust, which has also contributed to house alterations, allowing him to move around more freely.

His refusal to leave Edgbaston on Finals Day – despite the contest's proceedings nearing 12-hours of all-action, and his condition getting the better of him – was the events most telling tale. And paid dividends for Sky TV cameras to pan to the big-quick's box for charity appeals throughout the day's coverage.

Lawrence describes himself as "a strong, fearsome, never give up, big-hearted fast bowler." His 670 dismissals in First-Class and List A cricket act as more than adequate support to those claims. And with each wicket sitting in the context of five Test appearances and an



Image of 2024...

James Bracey presents Syd with the Vitality Blast trophy at Edgbaston in September, 2024.

“I could deal with the injury in New Zealand I suffered as an athlete, but I’ve clearly done something to upset the big man upstairs.”

ODI for England, little stood in the quick’s way before a knee injury in Wellington ended his career at the age of 28.

“I could deal with the injury in New Zealand, but I’ve clearly done something to upset the big man upstairs because he ended my career and has now given me this disease. Maybe he’s not a Gloucestershire fan,” Lawrence joked, then sat in front of what amounted to a full suite of Sky Sports cameras and crew, filming his story at the Bristol County Ground ahead of it being aired at Finals Day.

Following an operation to have his left kneecap removed in 2023, Lawrence wasn’t recovering as he should. A persistent tingling sensation in his toes, and his right leg giving way, signalled something was wrong. Four months in hospital were followed by the dreaded news.

“Being diagnosed with motor neurone disease is your worst nightmare. I call it the sadistic disease because it’s the worst you can get. You’ve got to not look too far into the future because that’s what can scare you. I try to live in the present,” he says, “and enjoy every day as it comes.

“Being able to talk to someone at the Trust and share my feelings in an impossibly dark time was a huge help,” Lawrence continued. “They helped get

me counselling because I was really struggling with not knowing what was wrong with me.

“Seeing the stories that the Trust have told in recent years makes you realise you never know what is around the corner, and that’s why the charity is such a great thing.” He’s referring to the 105 mental health cases supported by the Trust in 2023, with the number of individuals assisted since 2015 reaching almost 800. “It’s vital for current and ex-players. It’s a great charity that cricketers are lucky to have.”

Before Finals Day, the Gloucestershire President had also recently gone through the process of recording his voice in preparation for the sad eventuality that he will likely lose the ability to speak naturally.

“My wife can now write things that she wants me to say, and I’ll have no choice but to say it,” he jokes again, spirits remaining refreshingly high through the course of the interview. Matching Gloucestershire’s efforts on the field and the now-boisterous Edgbaston crowd.

“I just want to do as much as I can while I’m able to,” he adds, upon being asked about the book he is writing that concerns his life in cricket and journey with MND at the videos close.

“Whatever this disease is, it cannot take away my fighting spirit.”

And with Gloucestershire doing their level best to carry a measure of that fight onto the field, with Lawrence broadcast on big screens throughout the day, it provided a fitting backdrop to the David Lawrence story. In handing the Blast trophy to a now-tearful Syd at the close of play, James Bracey created an iconic image that will live long in the memory of English cricket. Mark Alleyne’s squad, inspired by the great man himself no doubt. The perfect day for Syd, all things considered.

SCAN FOR MORE INFO ON THE

CRICKETERS’ TRUST



Lawrence bowls for England B against Sri Lanka in 1986.

Challenge 2025



Toubkal Trek

Marrakech, Morocco
October 2025



SCAN FOR MORE INFO ON THE

**CRICKETERS'
TRUST**

THE CRICKETERS' TRUST IS LOOKING FOR ADVENTURERS

Reaching the dizzy heights of 4,167 metres, located 39 miles from Marrakech and the highest point in the Atlas Mountains, Morocco and all of North Africa, Mount Toubkal is an ultra-prominent peak and represents the next exciting opportunity for Trust supporters to help fundraise for the players' charity.

The Trust is looking for 30 participants to raise a combined £30,000 to help fund the life-changing and life-saving provision on offer to PCA members and

their immediate family members.

In recent years, fundraisers have completed epic challenges for the Trust, testing their endurance on the London to Paris bike ride, which raised over £50,000, the Headingley to Lord's bike ride and the Three Peaks challenge.

**Register your interest
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and help raise much needed funds for those PCA members who need it most.

ITINERARY:

FLY TO MARRAKECH

DAY 1 Marrakech to Imlil Valley (1,740m) to Toubkal Basecamp (3,207m) 5-6 hr walk

DAY 2 Toubkal Basecamp (3,207m) to Toubkal Summit (4,167m) to Toubkal Basecamp (3,207m) 6-7hr walk

DAY 3 Basecamp (3,207m) to Imlil Valley (1,740m) to Marrakech 4-5hr walk & stay overnight in a hotel in Marrakech

FLY HOME



The Unseen Test

1 in 5

players receive
vital support for
their mental health*

Dom Bess has faced a
constant unseen battle
away from the cricket field

Scan for more
stories and to
support the Trust



*based on 2023 current player figures

MEET THE PCA



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FULL TEAM

For all members
of the PCA team
and their contact
details, scan here.



NOTICES FOR MEMBERS

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Education Funding Forms should be completed online via the website attaching relevant receipts. Log-in to **thepca.co.uk** to process your claim.

DOWNLOAD THE PCA THRIVE APP

Working together to provide an NHS approved mental wellbeing app to support every member. Download via your app store and email **alison.prosser@thepca.co.uk** for your access code.



DISCRIMINATION

There is no place for any form of discrimination at any level of our game.

If you experience any discriminatory behaviour, report it anonymously. Reports will be treated seriously and sensitively. Call: **0800 3890031**
Email: **diversity.matters@cricketregulator.co.uk**
or: **equality@thepca.co.uk**

We all have a role to play in raising the game.

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From making a simple phone call for advice to a full contract negotiation, the PCA's Director of Cricket Operations Rich Hudson will be able to support you. Email: **rich.hudson@thepca.co.uk**
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The PCA has its own independent and confidential whistleblowing service. If you have a grievance and wish to file a complaint you can do so via a form accessible on **thepca.co.uk**

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A free helpline funded by the Cricketers' Trust is available 24/7 – and there is no such thing as a time waster. Whatever your problem please do reach out.

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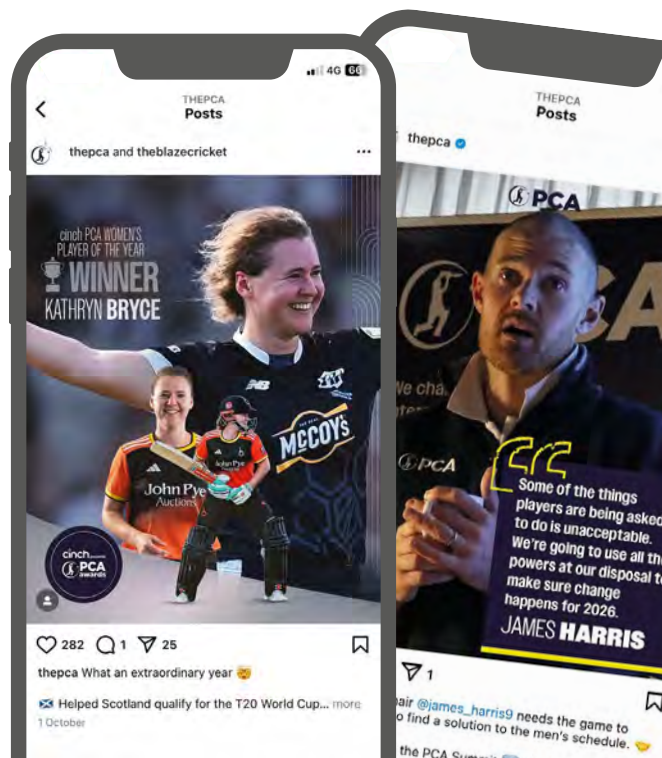
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OBITS

Remembering those who have
graced this great game.

1969 - 2024

GRAHAM THORPE

SURREY & ENGLAND

Both at county and international levels, Graham Thorpe was one of the finest cricketers of the modern era. This compact, versatile, and resolute attacking left-handed batter, while a lover of the cover-drive was no less adept at deflecting the ball on either side of the wicket. In addition, a sound slip fielder, he was also, particularly in his younger days, a tidy right-arm medium-pace bowler, often very good at breaking up highly stubborn partnerships.

Born in Farnham, Graham Paul Thorpe was educated at Weydon School and Farnham Sixth Form College. Graduating through the Surrey youth ranks he made his First-Class debut in 1988. Twelve months later, in his first full season his total of 1,332 runs earned him a place on the England A tour of Kenya and Zimbabwe. Capped in 1991, he made 341 appearances for Surrey, scoring 21,937 runs, his best score being an undefeated double-century.

The first of his 100 Test caps came in the Ashes at Trent Bridge in 1993 when he announced his arrival on the international scene with an unbeaten



114. His highest-ever Test score, an unbeaten 200 off 231 balls came against New Zealand in 2002. He won his hundredth cap against Bangladesh in 2005. Only 16 players have made more England appearances and only 14 have scored more runs.

Retiring in 2005, following some initial media work, he then moved into coaching, first in Australia with New South Wales, later working with England Lions. He then became England's batting coach, a role he held when the men's national team won their first World Cup in 2019. Awarded the M.B.E. in 2006. He was 55.

1935 - 2024

KEN STANDRING

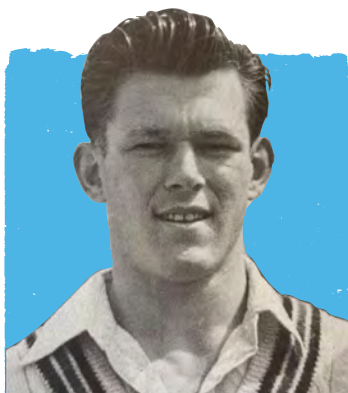
LANCASHIRE

Ken Standring, who has died aged 89, was Lancashire's oldest former player. A tall and accurate right-arm fast bowler, able to move the ball both ways off the pitch, he was also a powerful attacking left-handed batter.

Playing for the Red Rose from 1955 until 1959, on his debut in the 1955 Roses encounter his first victim was Len Hutton, bowling the England great for two. In all he made 13 First-Class appearances scoring 255 runs and taking 25 wickets.

Born in Clitheroe, Kenneth Brooks Standring was educated at Clitheroe Royal Grammar School and the University of Leeds. Having played his early cricket for Ribblesdale Wanderers and Farnworth, while teaching at Leeds Grammar School he played for Bingley.

The year 2000 saw him elected a Lancashire Vice President. A member of several Lord's committees, at the same time he also took on the role of Chairman of the National Association of Young Cricketers.

**1937 - 2024**

KEN PALMER MBE

SOMERSET & ENGLAND

Ken Palmer spent almost half a century serving the game. Playing for Somerset from 1955 until 1969, initially signed as a redoubtable middle-order batter, he soon developed into a fine right-handed fast-medium bowler. Later, from 1972 until 2002, he served as a First-Class umpire rising to the very pinnacle of the world game.

Marking his Somerset debut with two wickets against Middlesex, he was capped in 1958. Three years later he not only topped 1,000 runs for the season but also took more than 100 wickets, the youngest Somerset cricketer to do so.

When batting with Bill Alley against Northamptonshire that season, the pair put on 265 together, creating a new Somerset sixth-wicket batting record, Palmer ending undefeated on 125. Making 302 appearances for Somerset he claimed 837 wickets and scored 7,567 runs.

When donning the white coat in 1972 he remained as resolute in his decision-making as he had been as a batter. When 10 years later Ken was joined by younger brother Roy for Oxford University's early season encounter with Hampshire, the pair became the only brothers to have officiated together in a First-Class match. His final tally of 511 umpiring appointments included 22 Test matches and 23 ODIs. Son Gary also played for Somerset. He was 87.

1968 - 2024

NEIL STANLEY

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Born in Bedford, Neil Alan Stanley was regarded as one of the finest young cricketers of his generation, first coming to prominence when a schoolboy at Bedford Modern School.

A right-handed batter and occasional off-spin bowler, wider fame soon beckoned when a teenager playing minor counties cricket for Bedfordshire before going on to win representative honours with English Schools. He was subsequently chosen to represent England in the Under 19 World Cup.

Making his First-Class debut for Northamptonshire in April 1988, his early promise was sadly interrupted by a back injury which required surgery.

August 1991 saw him return to his imperious best when appearing at Lytham St Annes against Lancashire. There, he made his highest First-Class score, contributing 132 to a 236-run partnership shared with skipper, Allan Lamb. In all, between 1988 and 1992, he made 21 appearances for Northants totalling 1,019 runs. He was 56.

1949 - 2023

JIM ALLDIS

MIDDLESEX

Paddington-born James Stephen Alldis played twice for Middlesex in 1970, progressing to the county staff from the ranks of the MCC Young Professionals at Lord's. Alldis would go on to work as a taxi driver and groundsman, specialising unsurprisingly in cricket pitches. He was 74.

1936-2024

ANDREW CORRAN

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Born in Eaton, Norwich, two years of National Service saw the medium-fast bowler and right-hand bat go on to read Mathematics at Trinity College, Oxford between 1958-60.

He would go on to make 101 First-Class appearances for Nottinghamshire, taking over the captaincy from Reg Simpson when the club was looking for an amateur.

Also an excellent hockey player, he made appearances for Notts, Oxfordshire and Oxford University, as well as trials for England. He was 87.

1951 - 2024

MARTIN VERNON

MIDDLESEX & GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Born in Marylebone, Martin Jeffrey Vernon's cricketing talents were first recognised when he played for the MCC Young Cricketers at Lord's. A right-arm fast-medium bowler and right-handed lower-order batter, he played for Middlesex from 1974 until 1976.

Making his First-Class debut against Warwickshire in May 1974, two months later, against Somerset at Taunton, he completed a career-best match analysis of 11-112, twice claiming the scalps of Viv Richards and Brian Close. The figures included a spell of four wickets in seven balls during the second innings.

Joining Gloucestershire for the 1977 season, his career would be cut short by an ankle injury. However, not before he had helped the county beat Kent to claim that year's Benson & Hedges Cup.

In total, he took 31 wickets in 21 First-Class appearances and would become the Director of Client Services and Commercial Partnerships for Express Newspapers.



1953 - 2024

KEITH JENNINGS

SOMERSET

After a spell as a member of MCC Young Professionals, Wellington-born Keith Francis Jennings would spend 10 years on the Somerset staff.

Taking time to establish himself, he was a medium-pace bowler, a right-handed lower-order batter, and also a very fine close to the wicket catcher.

Like his mentor Tom Cartwright, he particularly excelled in the one-day game when he could be relied upon to bowl both straight and economically.

While never renowned for his batting skills, together with Dennis Breakwell, the pair's undefeated partnership of 95 against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge in 1978 created a new John Player League eighth-wicket batting record.

Capped that season, his best with the ball, his 40 First-Class wickets included a career-best return of 5-18 against Sussex at Hove.

Greater success for Jennings would come 12 months later. Having defeated Kent to claim the Gillette Cup, the following day they also managed to beat Notts at Trent Bridge to claim the John Player League Trophy.

Released in 1981 and returning to the family carpentry business, he claimed 96 wickets in 68 First-Class appearances. In 88 appearances in the one-day game, he took 104 wickets. He was 70.

1944 - 2024

BRIAN WARD

ESSEX

One of three 'Brians' (Taylor, Edmeades and Ward) to represent Essex in the '70s, the right-hander played for the county between 1967 and 1972, before representing Argentina in the inaugural ICC Trophy in England in 1979.

Bespectacled, Ward is somewhat infamously remembered for playing out eight consecutive maidens bowled by another 'Brian', Somerset's Brian Langford, during a John Player 40-over match. Described as 'rarely rushed', he 'donated' the off-spinner unsurpassable figures of 8-8-0-0.

A former MCC Young Professional, his high point came in 1970 when adding an unbroken 208 with Keith Fletcher against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge. His five and three-quarter hour vigil realising 164 unbeaten runs. In all, Ward made 128 First-Class and 70 List A appearances.

1937 - 2024

BARRY REED

HAMPSHIRE

A First-Class career that began in 1965 and ended in 1970 realised 123 appearances (32 List A) for this right-handed batter from Southsea.

As one of only nine Portsmouth-born Hampshire players, Reed made two First-Class centuries for the county which included a best of 138 made against Oxford University in 1970. A regular opening partner of South African great Barry Richards, Reed passed 1,000 runs on three occasions (1966-1968). He also made 104 against Glamorgan in 1967. Fittingly, at Portsmouth. He was 86.

1935 - 2024

KHALID IBADULLA

WARWICKSHIRE
& PAKISTAN

Khalid Ibadulla, universally known as Billy, was the first Pakistani to play county cricket, making more post-war appearances for Warwickshire during an 18-year career than any other player.

As a bowler, able to mix seam with off-spin, he was also a forceful right-handed batter. Even on the rare occasions that he failed with bat or ball, his fearless catching, particularly at short leg, could turn a game.

Disappointed to miss out on Pakistan's 1954 tour of England, he came to the UK seeking a trial with Warwickshire. After serving a three-year qualifying period, he not only helped the Bears to two notable Gillette Cup trophies but also the 1972 County Championship title. Making 417 appearances, his final tally of 17,078 runs includes 22 centuries. Capturing 462 wickets, he also held a remarkable 337 catches.

Long overlooked by the Pakistan authorities, when selected against the Australians in Karachi in October 1964, he became the first Pakistani cricketer to score a century on his debut. He made three further Test appearances, playing against New Zealand at Christchurch in 1965 and two years later, toured England, appearing at Leeds and Trent Bridge.

His son, Kassem, played county cricket for Gloucestershire. He was 88.

1953 - 2024

GILES CHEATLE

SUSSEX & SURREY

After making his debut against Surrey in 1974, Giles Cheatle would go on to make 40 First-Class appearances for Sussex before making the switch to Surrey in 1980 and adding a further 20 caps at the Oval.

During his six years at Hove, Cheatle took 77 First-Class wickets, including four five-wicket-hauls – his two wickets in the county's 1978 Gillette Cup final victory against Somerset at Lord's existing as his career-defining performance.

Across the border, the left-arm orthodox bowler made strong early impressions with 5-78 in his second game for Surrey – against Cambridge University at Fenner's – and followed it up by taking 5-28 in the next game against Sussex at the Oval.

As well as being a fantastic fielder, he took 104 First-Class wickets in all at 31.75 apiece, plus 66 at 23.71 in List A fixtures.

Moving to Australia after his career concluded, his daughter Lauren – who also bowls left-arm – has made 12 international appearances Down Under and appears for Southern Brave in The Hundred. He was 71.



1932 - 2023

ROGER VOWLES

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Grimsby-born Vowles spent 12 years at Trent Bridge, making 16 First-Class appearances as a right-handed bat and medium-pace bowler, debuting in 1957.

As an administrator, he would go on to hold posts as Secretary to the Supporters' Association as well as Assistant Secretary to the county club proper. A former clerk in the fishing industry he would rise to running his own travel business alongside former teammate Norman Hill. He was 91.

1951 - 2024

PHILIP THORN

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Born in St. George, Bristol, Philip 'Phil' Thorn debuted for Gloucestershire in 1974, scoring 45 runs and taking four wickets across four First-Class matches that season.

Following his county stint, Thorn played minor counties cricket for Wiltshire and Herefordshire from 1980 to 1997. A beloved figure in West Midlands amateur cricket, he continued representing Gloucestershire Over 60s and serving as President of Old Bristolians Westbury, for whom he last played in 2023. He was 72.

1941 - 2024

JOHN MARTIN

SOMERSET

Forty First-Class matches – for Oxford University (38) and Somerset (two) between 1962 and 1965 as a right-arm fast-medium bowler realised 93 wickets at an average of 29 apiece.

Oxford-born Martin attended school at Magdalene College before winning blues in hockey and cricket at Edmund Hall College, captaining the university in 1965. A long career as a schoolmaster began in 1966 at Wellington College in Berkshire, ending there as deputy head in 2002. He was 82.



1943 - 2023

ALAN WORSICK

LANCASHIRE

A titan of the Lancashire League, seamer Worsick played for Lancashire in 1978 as a right-arm seamer, taking 4-26 during what proved a single-match Lancashire career. Worsick passed away at the age of 79.

Three decades – spent primarily for Accrington – saw him play his final match in 1989 aged 44. The club's historic 1975 league win proved particularly notable for it being the only time when every member of the team was born in the town.

MEMORY LANE

Capturing the formative moments from the longest County Championship season on record. A season that saw Surrey win Division One, again, and Sussex lift the Division Two trophy on 29 September. We started in April...

PHOTO BY DAN ISTITENE



HERE COMES THE SUN

VISIT WORCESTERSHIRE NEW ROAD, WORCESTER
180 & 223/9 **WOR V LAN** 177

The start of Worcestershire's last match of the season was delayed as the ground staff worked flat out to dry the outfield following heavy rain overnight. The forecast for the rest of the day was ominous and with only a couple of hours' play completed after lunch, dark clouds began to move in. The sun popped out low on the horizon for a few minutes late in the afternoon, lighting the impressive Worcester Cathedral in the background.



PHOTO BY DAN MULLAN

BOTH SIDES OF A SMILE

SEAT UNIQUE STADIUM, BRISTOL
322 & 127/3 **GLO V MID** 203 & 499/70

A near run out for Ryan Higgins resulted in every player in the frame falling to the floor in either relief or disappointment. The mixture of body shapes makes for an interesting image as you don't often get players from both sides on the ground after the same play.

NEW BALLS PLEASE

THE 1ST CENTRAL COUNTY GROUND, HOVE
417 & 205 **GLO V SUS** 479 & 144/6

This is Brenda Lower, the 'keeper of the balls' who's called into action every time a ball is lost or knocked out of shape. She has been supporting Sussex for over 60 years and was even awarded a commemorative county cap in 2003 when Sussex won the championship for the first time.



PHOTO BY MIKE HEWITT



CAUGHT IN A WEB

THE COOPER ASSOCIATES COUNTY GROUND, TAUNTON

317 & 224 **SOM V SUR** 321 & 109

This is an image, that at one point, I wasn't expecting to take. About an hour before this was taken, the match was heading for a draw until Leachy and Archie Vaughan turned the game on its head. This celebration is the final wicket of a championship game that will live long in the memory of those down in Taunton.

PHOTO BY HARRY TRUMP

IN MEMORY OF

THE SPITFIRE GROUND, CANTERBURY
407 & 146/4 **KEN V WOR** 618/70

Gareth Roderick scored his hundred in the County Championship match against Kent at The Spitfire Ground. Gareth turned towards the pavilion and pointed with his bat to the squad number below the crest on his shirt in memory of Josh Baker, who had recently passed away. Worcestershire played with his squad number on their shirts for the remainder of the season in tribute to the spin bowler and the number 33 shirt has been retired in his memory.



MY FAVOURITE KITS

From white strips to baggy shirts with ugly armpits, former England all-rounder **LUKE WRIGHT** remembers three jerseys which retain a special place in his memory bank.



ENGLAND T20 WORLD CUP 2010

The shirt itself wasn't necessarily a fashion statement. It had a neon green spot under the armpit, and it was far too baggy. But to win a World Cup, you cannot help but to enjoy the shirt you win it in. This spotted green monstrosity will always symbolise an incredibly special memory of mine.

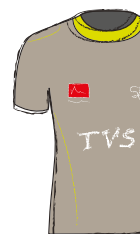


SUSSEX C&G TROPHY 2006

Winning my first trophy at Lord's, in front of a full house, has earned this shirt a special place in my bottom drawer. We beat Lancashire by 15 runs, realising my first ever white-ball trophy. I scored 19 batting at number nine and took two wickets at the close.

MELBOURNE STARS BIG BASH 2011

Shane Warne coming out of retirement for the Big Bash only made this shirt more special, he was an absolute superstar and a hero to all of us growing up. Of all my shirts I've worn, I have one where I was a teammate of Shane Warne. Not many people get the privilege of being able to say that.



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